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A CRUISE UPON WHEELS BY CHAS. A. COLLINS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

THE BRITISH MUSE

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

A CRUISE UPON WHEELS:

THE

CHRONICLE OF SOME AUTUMN
WANDERINGS AMONG THE DESERTED
POST-ROADS OF FRANCE.

BY

CHARLES ALLSTON COLLINS.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1874.

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A CRUISE UPON WHEELS.

CHAPTER I.

The Journey continued; the Forest; some Notice of the Beauties of Fontainebleau; a refreshing Incident leading to a Surprise.

WHAT a delightful thing it would be if life could be all morning. How full of animation and hope we feel at that time. How different is the aspect worn by everything about us to that which the same things present with the dark shade of evening thrown over them. Mr. Fudge had demolished his friend's barricade, and was out in the stable-yard before seven o'clock on the morning of their second day from Paris. Blinkers, to whom he paid a visit at once, was as fresh as a lark; and Mr. Fudge had the satisfaction of seeing him deeply engaged with a double feed of oats before he had been in the stable many minutes. They were to make an early start of it, intending to take a long rest in the middle of the day, and get on to Fontainebleau in the afternoon. Certainly, Mr. Fudge was in his element at a time like this. Busy with preparation, arranging and re-arranging perpetually the contents of the carriole, drawing out the ostler on the subject of horses, and questioning him as to

the nature of the road which he and his friend were about to travel; how long it would take them to reach such and such a place; where they ought to stop in the middle of the day, and so on.

It was not long before Mr. Pinchbold made his appearance in the stable-yard, with Mazard at his heels. The poor dog seemed somewhat in a more hopeful condition than on the previous day; but his tail was still not curled so triumphantly as of yore; his walk had less vivacity and animation about it than was right; and he failed to take that intense interest in all the nooks and corners about the place, which characterizes every member of the dog tribe when in a natural and wholesome condition. A slight improvement, however, was all that could be expected; and the old ostler, who professed to have a knowledge of dogs of an unlimited nature, prophesied, on hearing something of Mazard's history, that it would be a good week before he was quite himself again.

There was not much to be done in the way of breakfast at Ris; our travellers waited only for what could be prepared with little delay; and it was not much after half-past seven A.M. when they found themselves once more on the road.

It was quite astonishing what a different view Mr. Pinchbold took of affairs in the morning to that with which he regarded them at night. He was now disposed, in quitting their resting-place, to speak of it in the tone of one who had always regarded it in an amiable and affectionate light. He said it was a rough place, certainly; the people not very civilized, but evidently good people at bottom, and honest as the day. It was quite an interesting experience to have passed

a night at a place of the kind; and Mr. P. was quite glad they had stopped there.

It is a great surprise, and not a pleasant one, to the traveller, to find how universally the roads in this part of France are paved. The shaking and jumbling occasioned by this are fearful. It also strikes one as such a wonderful thing that so vast an undertaking as the paving of all these long roadways could ever, by any human agency, have been accomplished. It takes a long time to pave a street; to pave all these roads about France would, one would have thought, have required more time than has elapsed since the Deluge.

The country improves in point of beauty as Paris gets more distant. A fine view of a bend in the Seine occurs not far from Penthievre. This Penthievre is a large place, and our travellers would have done wisely to stop there for their midday rest; but Mr. Fudge thought they should have accomplished more of their journey before taking any repose. They went on, then, to Caillot, a wretched, deserted-looking village; where, seeing a man, the only inhabitant, apparently, at work in the capacity of wheelwright, they inquired of him where they could best put up their horse, and get something to eat themselves.

"Here," said the man. And with that he began opening the shutters of a closed-up house, next to the wheelwright's shop; then he went round to the back, and unbarred the doors of this same shut-up house, which it seemed was an inn—the man being a pluralist, and combining the functions of wheelwright and innkeeper.

An unpromising place; the man seemed to know

nothing about feeding the horse or anything else. His wife had to be sent for before the travellers could have anything to eat; so as the prospect of a meal seemed a remote one, they determined to beguile the time with a stroll about the village.

In an old forsaken churchyard, with unburied bones lying about it, routing about among the graves, and enjoying himself prodigiously, there appeared the second inhabitant of the village—an old and very mischievous-looking idiot. An uncouth beggar this, who clamoured greedily for alms, and who, having got a two-sous piece from Mr. Pinchbold, retired with it, grinning and mouthing, to the church-porch, where he seemed to be engaged in hiding it, evidently pretending to himself, to increase his gratification, that he had stolen the money. The third inhabitant of this joyous hamlet whom our friends encountered was another idiot—a young girl this time, who, running swiftly all around and about the place, lifted up her voice in wailings and cries as dreary and terrible to hear, as her wan face and disjointed figure were distressing to look upon. A sane old woman, looking out of window, and addressing a word of comfort to this wretched creature, made up, apparently, with one hen and a very little cur, the population of the place.

Mr. Fudge and his companion went a little way out of the village, and ascending a slight eminence, cast a glance forward towards the direction in which their road lay. A new feature was discernible in the prospect, and one of no small mark and interest. But a few miles on from where they stood, with the last grey hovels of the village close behind them, the ploughed lands, and the pastures, dotted as they were,

and thickly sometimes, with groups of trees—the open country, we say, stopped altogether, and a great, dark, ominous stain, that lay upon the earth like a shadow, stretched to right and left, and on ahead as far as the eye could see.

“It must be the forest,” said Mr. Pinchbold, softly.

He was right; the forest of Fontainebleau lay before them. To come upon it so quietly and unexpectedly; to be alone; to have no guides; to be free from the bewilderment of a large party; to have even no noisy explaining friend raving about the scene; to be under a soft grey sky, with the sun veiled for the day in heavy clouds; to look over from that sad village to where the earth was darkened by that great forest, was to come in view of so remarkable a prospect under circumstances peculiarly and rarely favourable. There is something wonderfully and mysteriously attractive even about a wood covering only a few acres of ground; while a forest, be it where it may, or what it may, must always fill us with something of awe as well as of admiration; but when that forest is the forest of Fontainebleau, it is surely impossible for any man but a dunce or a woodcutter to look upon it with anything of indifference in his regard.

Our two Englishmen were both well-read in the history of the country through which they were passing; and as they silently observed the scene before them, each was busy in his own mind with the memory of all that wealth of interest with which the name of Fontainebleau is associated. Every inch of ground seemed full of historical interest; and those ancient memories that seemed to hang yonder over the forest,

would creep even over the intervening space between it and the place where they stood, and make the very road whose stones sustained their weight—the road that connected the old town of Paris with the old hunting-seat of Fontainebleau—the road along which the kings of France, with all their train of courtiers and attendants, must have passed—the road by which messengers must have hurried so often with the slow haste of those days—the road by which the lover must have sped to steal an interview with some maid-of-honour at the Court, fretting in her gilded prison—this road itself became in turn, to both our travellers, a viaduct of the fancy, bridging over the space between the Present and the Past.

It was well that Mr. Fudge and his friend had something whereon at least to feed their minds, for it must be acknowledged that the sustenance provided by the wheelwright's wife, for their bodily support, was but of a low order of merit. A musty beef-steak, musty cutlets, and musty wine, were no great temptations to excess, and a giant cauliflower, on which the travellers were disposed to fall back, was speedily abandoned when Mr. Pinchbold discovered that it had been sent to table without the previous formality of ejecting the slugs from their favourite quarters in the recesses of the stalk. Altogether, then, it was a sorry meal, and what added to its unsatisfactoriness, was the fact that Mazard had not sufficiently recovered his appetite to eat up what Mr. Fudge and his friend could not swallow. The dog was still moping sadly. In deference to Mr. Pinchbold's wishes, he would certainly make an attempt to eat, an attempt, however, which became abortive, after the first few mouthfuls

had, with obvious reluctance, been got down. It was very sad to see him, and Mr. Pinchbold repented more than once, that in his selfish desire to possess him, he had taken the dog away from his own natural sphere where he was enjoying himself after his own manner.

"I wonder," said Mr. Pinchbold, "if he would eat some of his favourite sponge cakes," and it was agreed that the next time they met with any, the experiment should be tried. Meanwhile Mr. Fudge still stuck to his opinion, that time would bring him round.

It was exactly at four o'clock in the afternoon, that the carriage passed by the first tree that marked the commencement of the forest of Fontainebleau. It is not often that an event such as this can be noted with such precision. It commonly happens that the approaches to those places which we have heard and thought much about are very gradual, and their outworks so scattered and far extended, that we can hardly define the actual moment of our obtaining admission within the long anticipated precincts. It is not so with the forest of Fontainebleau, the limits of whose enclosure are at this point as clearly defined as those of an English gentleman's park. As you advance farther into the interior of the forest, and lose sight of the gleam of open country outside, a curious sense of confinement and restraint comes over you, and beautiful as all around you unquestionably is, you feel, in some sort, that those tall trees fence you about and hem you in, and that you breathe less freely than you did outside. And yet the place is beautiful. The little cleared spaces that you come to now and then, where vast fragments of rock appear so suddenly, and in spots where their presence could be so little anti-

cipated, that they seem rather as if they had been placed in those positions than as if they grew there and were part of the soil; the little glades which surprise you from time to time, where the ground dips into a valley; the by-paths which, diverging from the main road, sometimes with a notice at the corner recording where they lead to, sometimes with no such guiding indication, invite you to follow their green windings, and losing yourself quickly in the heart of the forest, abandon all hope of a return to civilization; the great stone cross raised at a place where four roads meet, and looking in its colossal size so dim and spectral as you approach it from a distance—all these things are beautiful indeed, but beautiful in that sad and melancholy way which is perhaps the best of all. It was in such a scene that the companion of the banished Duke found food for his unchanging melancholy, and our two friends, as they drove along, took note of this, and asked each other how much of that rough courtier's sadness was attributable to the trees of Ardennes.

The progress of our travellers through the great forest was to both of them full of interest and delight. It was mainly achieved on foot, and it took so long to pause before the points of special interest; so long to peer into this little mysterious glade, where assuredly the fairies come from their hiding-places when the night falls to dance; so long to gaze down that dark vista whose turf the feet of gnomes and woodsprites press in their midnight gambols; so long for Mr. Fudge to stand at the horse's head, while Mr. Pinchbold climbed up a rock to get a glimpse of some special prospect, and coming back in raptures, insisted

on his friend doing the same, while he took charge of Blinkers—a proceeding which he accomplished by standing directly in front of the animal, and holding a rein tightly in each hand—all these things took so long, that the dusk of the evening was beginning to fall when the two Englishmen found themselves quite suddenly at the entrance to the town of Fontainebleau.

The limits of this town are as definitely marked as those of the forest itself, by which it is girt about. It is curiously situated, not in the neighbourhood of the forest, not on the edge of the forest, or even just within it. It seems to be in the very centre of this vast wood, and there is a sense of confinement, and of imprisonment even, that comes over you as you realize this fully, which would make Fontainebleau (charming and delightful as it is) an impossible place as a residence. Charming and delightful, and almost inconceivably romantic it is, unquestionably, for a time, and till that *longing for a horizon* comes upon you, a more beautiful residing place could hardly be found. But that longing is sure to come. You want to soar above the trees, and see the world beyond, and you strain your eyes along the endless vistas which intersect the forest, in hopes of getting a glimpse of distant hill or plain, with the edge of the round world against the sky.

The Hotel de Paris, where our travellers put up, was a great contrast to the auberge of the previous night. Mr. Pinchbold, who, in addition to his usual descriptive notices of his bedrooms, has generally something to say of the hotel or innkeeper, and the

staff of persons in office under him, makes at Fontainebleau an entry to the following purpose:—

“Patron, another name for landlord, and that generally in use among the servants,—Patron, a youngish man, who lounged about like a guest, and did not seem to take much interest in business; wife, fussy and disagreeable; satirical myrmidons in the hall of the hotel, who presume to smile as my friend and I pass in and out. One agreeable waiter, who, though able to speak English, abstained from cramming that accomplishment down one’s throat;—no waiter should answer you in English when you address him in French. The power of speaking English should always be reserved till it is asked for, and it should be a universally respected canon, that the language in which you address any person, should be the language in which that person responds to you. The ostler at this hotel never to be found, but when at length caught, loquacious on the subject of his experiences as coachman to some mythical French count, also prone to relate wonderful things about the horses in the stable, and the fabulous prices which they had cost.

“Bedroom, cheerful and well-lighted,” Mr. Pinchbold continues; “two sides exposed to the outer air, and three windows prettily curtained. Bed against wall, with curtains passed through a mahogany ring which hangs from ceiling. Gilt clock, represented as growing in a bronze rock; a youth in the costume of a theatrical page has succeeded in propping himself up with one elbow on the rock and one foot on the ground; he holds a bluntly-pointed instrument in one hand, and has an open volume before him slipping off

the rock, and as he is kicking frantically with one leg, and is grasping idiotically at his chin with the unemployed hand, may be supposed to be composing a sonnet to his mistress's eyebrow. The clock of course does not go. A print called 'l'Amour Maternel,' so entitled with justice, since nothing but a maternal love verging on the morbid could have induced any woman to have taken upon her knee a child so odious as that represented by the painter of this picture."

It was a pleasant thing, after the privations of Ris, to sit down to a comfortable dinner in a well-lighted and prettily decorated *salle-à-manger*. A visit to Blinkers, and a walk about the town, where Mr. Fudge and his friend had some purchases to make, filled up the evening. Among these purchases were some of those sponge cakes of which Mazard had formerly been so fond. The dog, however, would not touch one of them, but walked away after faintly smelling at the proffered cake, more disconsolately, and with his tail more out of curl than ever.

"I don't know what we shall do with him," said Mr. Pinchbold, despairingly, just after this new instance of Mazard's unhappiness. "He seems to me to be pining; in spite of his thick fur I can see that he is much thinner than he was, and his skin hangs about him quite loosely."

Mr. Fudge looked at the dog carefully under a lamp, for they were standing in the street, and just outside the shop where the sponge cakes had been bought.

"Try him with a sou," suggested Mr. Fudge.

Mr. Pinchbold took one of these coins out of his

pocket and held it out towards the dog. Mazard declined it, just as he had declined the cake; after that, Mr. Fudge made an attempt in his turn—it was equally unsuccessful. The dog steadily declined to go through his old performance under the new circumstances. Mr. Pinchbold did all in his power, and so did his companion. They showed him the cake, they showed him the shop, they showed him the sou, but beyond looking at them wistfully and with a chopfallen countenance, and faintly wagging his tail, the unfortunate Mazard made no response to their appeal. Nay, when they came back to the place after walking for a time about the town, and tried the dog once more, it was still useless, and Mr. Pinchbold was half inclined at one moment to believe that the dog had been changed, so completely ignorant did he seem to be of his former accomplishment, and everything connected with it.

Mr. Pinchbold looked dejectedly at his friend.

“I have an idea,” said Mr. Fudge, suddenly; “it is a very fanciful one, too absurd to mention.”

“Then, for heaven’s sake, mention it!” cried Mr. Pinchbold.

“I was thinking, then,” Mr. Fudge answered, “that if you could convey to the dog’s understanding an impression that you were in some way connected with the old patissier’s shop where he used to live, and that it would even be profitable to you if he was to deal with you for cakes—but it’s too ridiculous,” said Mr. Fudge, interrupting himself.

“Not a bit of it,” said Mr. Pinchbold; “I believe this dog to be capable of anything, and I am determined to try him.”

It being still tolerably early in the evening, there was yet time for Mr. Pinchbold and his friend to begin hunting about the town for the paraphernalia which was necessary for the carrying out of their experiment. After hunting about for some time, our friends found themselves in front of a small shop, which appeared to be a compound of a broker's, a cabinet-maker's, and a carpenter's.

"There is the very thing," said Mr. Pinchbold.

Mr. Fudge looked in the direction indicated by his friend, and saw in an obscure corner of the shop a little upright wooden cabinet of the roughest kind, and something under a couple of feet in height. It was a common-looking thing, with three or four little panes of glass let into the folding-doors, and Mr. Fudge took it into his head that because these little windows were shaped like Gothic arches, that therefore this little shabby cabinet had been some poor nun's bookcase in which she kept her library of devotion. On going into the shop to make inquiry about the cabinet, it proved that Mr. Fudge's hypothesis was likely enough to be a true one, for the old man who owned it said that it had come to him with some other odds and ends of religious furniture, and he believed it had once been in a convent. On opening the little bookcase, it was found to have just one shelf across the middle of it, and was pronounced by Mr. Pinchbold to be just the thing for their purpose.

"And if," he said, coming out of the shop with the bookcase wrapt up in an odd number of the *Indépendance Belge*, "if the poor nun had known the use to which her little bookcase was to be put, I think

she would have owned it, at any rate to be a harmless one, and would have wished us luck in our enterprise."

Mr. Pinchbold and his friend now returned to the pastrycook's shop where they had bought the cakes, and having purchased a good supply of them, proceeded next—in pursuance of his idea of converting the little cabinet into a pastrycook's shop—to secure certain articles which might be considered emblematical of confectionery. There was, and had been in the window of that shop for many a year, a certain fictitious mould of call's-foot jelly, which on that principle of exaggeration which characterizes all imitations, presented an aspect of brilliancy and transparency so outrageous that no one could possibly have been taken in by it. Having made, to the intense astonishment of the people of the shop, a remunerative offer for this delusive article, and having at once secured it for his own, Mr. Pinchbold next proceeded to treat for a couple of impossible-looking phials of syrup, and a glass of currant-jelly. These things having now become his lawful possessions, Mr. P. released the nun's bookcase from the shelter of the *Indépendance Belge*, and clapped the whole of his newly acquired property into the interior of the cabinet. Mr. Pinchbold had no one to divide with him the intense astonishment of the pastrycook and his family at his proceedings, for his friend Mr. Fudge was waiting outside the door with Mazard in his charge, it not being considered desirable to admit the dog at this stage behind the scenes. There remained but one more purchase to be made, in the shape of a white apron, and this having been got at the principal

haberdasher's shop, Mr. Pinchbold pronounced that his preparations were complete, and marched off with some importance in his step to the stables, to deposit his stock-in-trade in the carriage.

The next morning was one of those which are not uncommon in the month of October, when the air, which would be chilly enough without the sun, retains, in spite of that luminary, a certain sharpness which is like the sparkle of champagne. What a morning for Fontainebleau! What a morning to tip with tender sunlight and veil with luminous shadow the little quaint courtyards of the Palace, and to reveal as you stood upon the terrace every nook and corner of its lovely garden!

For Fontainebleau is surely of all the show places in the world the most completely and almost incredibly lovely. Not Windsor, in all the stateliness of its proud power; not Versailles, imposing, ostentatious, magnificent; not Hampton Court, pregnant with associations, prim and *soigné* in its old-fashioned garb; not any of these can be mentioned even with the praise they merit, till he who has stood upon the terrace of Fontainebleau, who has wandered among its ancient courts, and paced alone or with one cherished friend the paths and alleys of its vast garden, has forgotten his first overwhelming impression and left it in the far distance!

There are few things so delightful as an old garden. Advance as we may in other matters, we shall never hit upon any scheme for laying out a garden so perfect as that which has been established once for all by those cunning workmen who laid out such pleasure-grounds as those of Versailles and Fon-

tainebleau. The terrace! what an invention alone is the terrace-walk! Whether standing on it and glancing over on the scene below, or walking in the garden and looking up at its stone balustrades, there is something besides splendour, and better than it, conveyed by the notion of a terrace. Its smooth and even gravel seems to perpetuate the sunlight, even though the sun itself may be hidden by the clouds. There are other parts of your pleasure-grounds, such as the walk beside the oblong fish-pond, that are suggestive, though not unpleasantly so, of something pensive and melancholy; but the terrace with its sunshine, the terrace on which the holiday figures, who have passed through the long windows to reach it, are longing as they watch the sunset, and trifle away the last hour of daylight; the terrace with its grey sundial; the terrace with its flight of steps, on which the peacock suns its foolish beauty; the terrace is all for happiness, for pleasure, for gaiety. One would almost say that no one could pass an unhappy hour upon a terrace-walk, that no one could tell bad news upon a terrace, or speak in bitterness or wrath. Nor is that garden which you overlook from the terrace heights, and which lies so low and snug under their shelter, to be surpassed in the sense of luxury and comfort which it so strongly suggests. How prosperous and cared for it looks, tended like the children of the rich, groomed like the winner of a Derby. The differences of station are not developed between man and man alone, we see them unmistakeably enough among the brute creation, and surely there is a high-bred look about those flower-beds in the Palace-garden which indicates a different rank and

grade to that held by the little tangled plots of marigold and chrysanthemum behind the auberge at Ris.

Mr. Fudge and his companion spent a long morning at Fontainebleau, and as they passed out of the precincts of the Palace, and noted the fierce tourists assailing the place, led on to the charge by a *valet de place*, whose presence would blast even the beauty of Fontainebleau itself, they were struck with a mixed feeling, of surprise that people should come to that wondrous place and want to know anything about it but what its fair outside revealed, and of profound self-gratulation at their own good fortune in being allowed to explore, unguided and alone, the beauties of this ancient seat.

Enough of it. To the many to whom Fontainebleau is known a further description would be useless, while with regard to those who know it not, if what has been said has conveyed the notion of an old grey building with cool court-yards, leading one out of another, with pointed turrets here and there, round which the pigeons wheel and poise; if it has conveyed the notion of a garden of vast size, sunk within a rampart of terraces for shelter, with numberless flower-beds, with prim gravel walks, with fountains and basins of clear water, where the triton, the river-horse, and the nymph, are not unknown; a garden that seems to have caught the sunshine, and to hold it there for ever; if it has suggested a park domain beyond, with a chain of oblong pools of water leading out to the forest ground which hems this paradise about—if this much has been done, and if, above all, it has made the reader long to see the place for himself, it is enough.

A short stage was before our travellers to-day. They were to sleep at Montereau, the scene of one of Napoleon's sieges, about which, however, the reader shall not be bored. The long course of the day before, about six-and-thirty miles, made a short one—and Montereau lay at a distance of fifteen miles only—very desirable. It was about one o'clock in the afternoon when the travellers took their last look at the palace, and passed out once more into the forest.

There never was a horse so soon elated and so soon depressed as Blinkers. The morning of the start from Fontainebleau was one of his gloomy periods, and he trotted along with his head down, and every symptom of despair developed in his whole bearing. The fact is that the forest weighed upon him, and kept down his spirits. There could be no doubt about this. Later in the day, and when our travellers had at length got clear of the last trees of that great wood, the little horse plucked suddenly up, and became almost too frisky to be borne.

Before, however, they were out of the forest there was a solemn ordeal to be gone through, and a great performance was to take place, in which Mazard was to take a prominent part.

It had been arranged between Mr. Fudge and his companion that the great experiment of the pastry-cook's shop, the experiment which had induced Mr. Pinchbold to become the possessor of the nun's book-case, and had caused him to invest his capital in a mould of artificial jelly, and other matters mentioned above—it had been agreed, I say, that this experiment must be made in private, and in some spot as far removed from human ken as possible.

"Now for it," said Mr. Fudge, pulling up at the side of the road, and preparing to descend.

The place was well chosen. The road was long and straight, so that any one within a mile or so must necessarily have been in sight; a surprise, therefore, was impossible.

Mr. Pinchbold and his friend had determined that in carrying out the commercial transaction in which they were about to engage, they would take no notice at all of Mazard, not calling his attention to what they did, or appearing to have any view of teaching him anything by their performance.

The carriage having been drawn up, then, in a quiet place, and the depression of the little horse's spirits appearing to be highly favourable to the chances of his standing still, our two travellers descended from their seats without further delay, and proceeded at once to business.

First of all, Mr. Pinchbold, with great care and elaboration, lifted the nun's bookcase out of the interior of the carriage, and placed it in a convenient and telling position, with its weight mainly supported on one of the wheels of the vehicle. Then he took from a place of concealment the white apron purchased on the preceding evening, and fastened it round his body, and it must be owned that, this being accomplished, the worthy gentleman would have looked singularly like a pastrycook if he had not, for some reason or other, borne a still stronger resemblance to a butlerman. The apron having been now thoroughly adjusted, it became Mr. Pinchbold's next duty to open the shop, or, in other words, to unlock the bookcase. The shop was rather in dishabille, Mr. Pinchbold hav-

ing, for safety's sake, enveloped the more fragile of its contents in numerous papers to prevent them from rattling about; but when these were once removed, and the jelly-mould, the syrup bottles, and the cakes were revealed in all their majesty, the effect was very splendid indeed, and calculated to impress any right-minded dog with the conviction that the object before him was a "Branch Confectionery Establishment" or nothing. Also, had all these proceedings of Mr. Pinchbold been watched by Mazard with a degree of eagerness and excitement which he had not manifested on any previous occasion throughout the journey.

The "shop" being now fairly open and everything in readiness, Mr. Fudge, who had been walking about at a little distance watching his opportunity, came up to where his friend was standing, looking like a lunatic butterman, and commenced proceedings without further delay. It must be acknowledged that there was something theatrical, almost pantomimic, in Mr. Fudge's way of performing his part. He began by an elaborate and prolonged inspection of Mr. Pinchbold's stock-in-trade. The calf's-foot jelly, the bottles of syrup, and the cakes having all been carefully examined, Mr. Fudge fixed upon one particular sponge-cake, and pointed it out in a marked and special manner, with his forefinger directed towards it. Mr. Pinchbold, with equal elaboration, selected this cake from his stock, and, holding it in his hand, descended to the front, in company with his friend, very much as the honest tradesman in a pantomime comes out of his shop and down to the foot-lights with Harlequin, when that unprincipled character is about to play him a trick. Indeed, the whole thing had at this moment a curious

look of a pantomime, and had any bystander been looking on he might almost have persuaded himself that it would only take the waving of a wand to turn Mr. Pinchbold into Pantaloon, Mr. Fudge into Harlequin, Mazard into the fairy Do-good, the carriage into an enchanted car, Blinkers into a dragon, and the Forest of Fontainebleau into the enchanted Palace of Benevolence, all ablaze with pink fire.

Mr. Fudge and his friend, then, having taken up a prominent position where all their movements could be perfectly well seen—Mr. Pinchbold, however, still remaining near enough to the “shop” to show his connexion with the business—the transaction which was to put Mr. Fudge in possession of the coveted cake went on without further delay, except that caused by the extreme slowness and care with which the two performers went through their parts. Never was a coin so long in reaching the hand held out to receive it as the sou which Mr. Fudge drew out of his pocket and delivered, after prolonged flourish and much elaborate gesture, to the amateur pastrycook. Never was any piece of goods so slow in delivery as that small article of confectionery which Mr. Pinchbold handed to his friend at last; whilst surely no sponge-cake was ever eaten with such ceremony and demonstrativeness as were brought to bear by Mr. Fudge upon the consumption of this important morsel.

Mr. Fudge, leaning very much forward and conveying his food to his mouth with a marvellous wave of the hand, was just committing the fourth mouthful to that region where its merits could be most fully appreciated, when his purpose was suddenly arrested by the simultaneous occurrence of a violent start on the

part of Blinkers, the descent of the "shop" from its position on the wheel, a sharp cry from Mr. Pinchbold, a volley of barks from Mazard, and the apparition on every side of him at once, as it appeared, of a party of ladies and gentlemen, on horseback, who had apparently then and there sprung out of the ground for his and his friend's especial discomfiture. The fact is, that though the two Englishmen had chosen their position well in selecting a place where a long extent of road before and behind them was exposed to view, they had at the same time failed to remark that they were just at the entrance of one of those green alleys already spoken of which communicate with other parts of the Forest, and ultimately with the town of Fontainebleau itself. From this green alley, then, whose pavement of turf rendered it peculiarly adapted for purposes of surprise, the party by which our friends found themselves surrounded had emerged. Whether they had been for any length of time spectators of the drama which we have feebly attempted to describe, or whether the first they saw of it was what burst upon their view at the moment when Mr. Fudge was engaged with his cake, while Mr. Pinchbold, girt about in his apron, and standing by the side of his shop, looked benignly on, it is impossible to say. Mr. Pinchbold affirmed afterwards, however, that he fancied that he had heard a covert laugh at the moment when Mr. Fudge placed the sou in his hand. Be this as it may, it is quite certain that every member of that detested group was on the broad grin; and that one young lady, whom Mr. Pinchbold mentions in his diary as being gifted with great personal attractions, laughed so much that she could scarcely sit in her saddle.

Mr. Pinchbold was a gentleman of a susceptible disposition, and keenly alive to the importance of making a favourable impression upon that sex of which he was a devoted and respectful admirer. What were his feelings, then, at being discovered surrounded by confectionery properties, and with a flowing white apron firmly girt about him. To whisk this garment off and fling it into the innermost recesses of the carriage, would not, after all, have been much use; but even this subterfuge was not possible, for Mr. Pinchbold had, in his eagerness to get rid of this appendage, entwined the strings into a tight knot. In order, too, to get better at this fastening, the unfortunate gentleman managed to twist the apron round so that it hung at his back. It was unfortunately at this moment that it occurred to this unhappy man that it would be a good plan to veil himself from farther observation by taking refuge in the carriage. Acting upon this impulse, Mr. Pinchbold hastily turned round and commenced a rapid ascent into the vehicle, his apron waving behind him in the breeze. A roar of laughter, in which Mr. Fudge could not help joining, saluted Mr. P.'s retreat; but all was not over yet, for Blinkers, feeling that some one had ascended the carriage, and taking it into his head that his burden was complete, started suddenly off at a good round pace, and had already got to a considerable distance before Mr. Fudge could overtake and stop him. As if, too, to make the confusion still greater, the whole of what has been described took place to an accompaniment of snarling and barking occasioned by the noble behaviour of Mazard. A large dog, belonging to some member of the equestrian party, seeing that the contents of Mr.

Pinchbold's "shop" had been scattered in all directions in consequence of the downfall of that place of business, commenced an instant assault upon some of those sponge-cakes which had been provided for Mazard's especial benefit. A dog so conscientious in paying for everything he consumed as Mazard could not be expected to stand such an unprincipled attack as this upon his master's property. Bristling, therefore, in every hair till he looked more like a porcupine than a dog, Mazard instantly flew at the purloiner of Mr. Pinchbold's goods, and pinned that dishonourable animal by the throat. A furious combat ensued, but virtue was triumphant; and when our two friends returned with the carriage in search of the "shop" and its contents, they found Mazard alone mounting guard over the *débris*, his opponent and the cavalcade to which he belonged being by this time far away in the distance.

Mr. Pinchbold was in despair. He vowed that the memory of this horrible mischance would haunt him to his last hour; that he would retire from the world, and hide in some obscure corner, where no one should ever see or hear of him again. It was very well for Mr. Fudge, who had had no ridiculous apron fastened round him, nothing to hide except a morsel of sponge-cake—this morsel, by the bye, Mr. Fudge found, to his astonishment, several hours afterwards, in his trousers-pocket—but for him (Pinchbold) the case was different. To be seen by all these people, and by *her*, with that disgusting apron clinging about him, standing by the side of a portable cupboard full of cakes and jellies, in the middle of a forest!

"She was beautiful, too!" said Mr. Pinchbold, after

a pause, and speaking now in tones of calm despair —“she was beautiful!”

The interruption which had brought that transaction in the cake trade, which we have attempted to describe, to so sudden a termination, did not take place till all the more important parts of the drama which our two friends had been enacting were concluded. As regarded the education of Mazard, then, no harm had been done by the violent “shutting up” of Mr. Pinchbold’s shop. Nothing could exceed the intense and tremendous interest with which the dog had watched the progress of the little pantomime, which had been got up for his benefit, from beginning to end, and both Mr. Fudge and his friend conceived the most sanguine hopes of the effect which it might be expected to produce. It had been agreed, however, between them that some time should be allowed to elapse, and that at least one more repetition of the performance should take place before any attempt should be made to ascertain how far Mazard had been enlightened by what he had seen.

Mr. Pinchbold and his friend set themselves to work to pick up the shop and its contents, which, beyond the abstraction of one cake by the strange dog, and the breakage of one of the bottles of syrup, had not suffered any damage. As they were thus engaged, Mr. Pinchbold would from time to time address his stock-in-trade in terms of deep and pathetic reproach.

“In an evil hour,” he said, “oh, bookcase ecclesiastical, did my eye light on thee! In an evil hour wert thou converted from thy former reverend office into a receptacle for cakes, for jelly-moulds, and the like wretched wares! Woe to thee, and to the timber of which

thou wert made, for thou hast betrayed me into the most ludicrous mischance into which ever man fell!"

Our travellers now betook themselves once more to the carriage, and it was not long before they began to discover unmistakeable signs of their being near the edge of the forest, and about to emerge once more into the open country. It was at this time that a marked change became manifest in the behaviour of Blinkers, a degree of alacrity and impetuosity developing itself in his "running," which formed a striking contrast to the despondency which had oppressed him while in the inclosure of the forest.

Mr. Fudge and his friend were now beginning to have a better understanding of the little horse. The extraordinary caprices to which he had given way on the afternoon when they left Paris had been followed by a day of such good behaviour, that the confidence of our two travellers in their new purchase was in a measure restored. Of course, Mr. Fudge could not fail to perceive that the horse he was driving was a very different animal from the phlegmatic and docile Bijou, but still he saw no signs of absolute vice in Blinkers, and as long as a horse is not vicious, the recurrence of occasional fits of friskiness is rather amusing than otherwise. Blinkers ran away from the forest of Fontainebleau as if the place was haunted, and all the wood-demons in full pursuit of him; and when Mr. Fudge wanted to pull him up, in order that he might purchase some grapes in a village which lay in their way, it was really quite a difficult matter to arrest his progress, or to hold him still while the bargain for the grapes was being effected.

This purchase of grapes was one of those little

indications of progress in their journey for which our travellers were always on the look out. It was one of the chief attractions of a journey such as this, that the advance made was so slow and gradual, that the two Englishmen were able to note the difference even between one department and another, and to detect even the smallest gradation that marked their approach to some new kind of scenery.

They were among the vineyards. They were in the middle of France. They were buying more delicious grapes than they could eat for three halfpence. The vineyards were all around them, and as far as they could see; even when, after they had rattled through Moret, they paused on the brow of the hill which overlooks the great plain in which Monterau is situated, the chief feature of the landscape was still found in the presence of the vineyards. It is well to say that French vineyards are mere fields of currant-bushes; one knows that they are *not* currant-bushes, and the resemblance did not make our travellers feel in the least less convinced that they were travelling through a new country, and that the sun of the south was shining on them, though with its most widely-extended rays.

There certainly never was anything like the little horse's impatience that day. While Mr. Fudge and his friend were looking at the view, and admiring the winding of the Seine in the valley, and the curious range of hills stopping so abruptly above the town, Blinkers was fretting and stamping, just as anxious for more work as if the two previous days' journeys had been nothing more than a drive in the Champs Elysées. The hill descended, the drag taken off, every-

thing seemed favourable to his desire of getting on. At this time, too, our travellers were overtaken and passed by the first vehicle which they had seen that day. It was a very light cabriolet, drawn by an immense and powerful horse, who stepped along as if he were winning a trotting match. There was no holding in Blinkers after this equipage had passed. Regardless of the difference between himself and the gigantic animal whose pace he was emulating, and of that which existed between the cabriolet and the car-riole, he set off after it, and it was all Mr. Fudge could do to keep this excitable animal from running his ambitious nose into the back panels of the vehicle which preceded them. This headlong race lasted for nearly an hour, and would doubtless have continued much longer if it had not happened that, at the expiration of the period just named, the cabriolet turned suddenly off into a lane leading in a direction exactly contrary to that which our travellers were pursuing. This stimulating contest had, however, brought them so rapidly on their way that they found themselves at its conclusion at the entrance to the town much earlier than they anticipated; and so, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, they turned into the open gates of the Hotel du Grand Monarque at Montereau.

While Mr. Fudge and his friend were looking at the view, and admiring the winding of the Seine in the valley, and the curious range of hills stopping so abruptly above the town, Blinkers was sitting and stamping, just as anxious for more work as at the two previous days' journeys had been nothing more than a drive in the Campagna. The hill descended, the drag taken off, every-

CHAPTER II.

The Matter contained in this Chapter will, it is hoped, serve to convince the Reader that the Office of a "Plain Cook" is one surrounded with Difficulties of the most overwhelming Sort.

THE Grand Monarque was in a state of great bustle and excitement, caused by the presence within its walls of the officers belonging to a regiment which was on its way from Paris to Lyons, and the men of which were scattered about in different parts of the town, but all engaged in that one occupation of peeling potatoes, to which all billeted soldiers seem to be so specially devoted.

The Grand Monarque was inconveniently full, for not only were there a dozen or so of these officers who were to have it all their own way, as far as accommodation went, but it chanced that, at the same time, there were staying in the town several members of that class by which the inns in the smaller French towns are almost entirely supported, the *commis voyageurs*, or commercial travellers, who, in the service of great Parisian and other firms, wander about into all sorts of remote nooks and corners of the empire in search of business. Our travellers had, it will be remembered, already encountered two gentlemen of this

description at the little town of Doullens, and they were destined, in the course of their journey, to meet with many more of them.

The inn, then, being thus occupied by the bagmen and the military, there was but little room left for Mr. Fudge and his friend. It is true that the waiter was ready enough to promise our travellers every species of accommodation; but it happened also, unfortunately, that this official was but a powerless wretch, with no means of carrying out those good intentions with which he seemed literally brimming over. He was a slippery waiter, too, one of that order of menials who is for ever disappearing at the exact crisis when he is wanted, and whose notion of fetching you any object you require is to rush off with immense alacrity in search of it, and reappear no more. There was no end to the bedrooms, the washing-stands, the present refreshments, the future meals, which this unlucky youth (for he was of tender years) pledged himself to produce; but, unfortunately, when the moment for the fulfilment of his pledge arrived, nothing was forthcoming; and it was only when Mr. Fudge, in desperation, absolutely laid hold of him as he was running away, and refused to let him go, that he at last showed the two friends into a large double-bedded room, which he placed at their service. Poor wretch, he had reckoned without his host, or rather his hostess; for it was not many minutes before the voice of the landlady was heard from without inquiring what he promised to himself, by showing "those travellers" into a room already appropriated by the worthy gentleman who travelled for the great firm of Sachet and Co., Paris.

Our two Englishmen were now ushered by the

landlady herself along several narrow passages, and up and down a great many flights of steps, into the most huge and deserted-looking ball-room that can be imagined, with a raised dais at one end of it, and a music-gallery at the other. There were three or four doors opening into it, and one of these being opened by the landlady, disclosed what she pronounced, with little ceremony, to be the only room left at her disposal. It was a little room, as Mr. Pinchbold describes it, lighted by a window giving on the stable-yard, and communicating with another smaller than itself, which was also placed at the disposal of our travellers, and which had no window at all, being illuminated only by an *œil de bœuf* over the door. There was nothing else to be had, so with a miserable joke on the advantage of having the ball-room at hand for purposes of exercise, our travellers were fain to put up with the accommodation offered them, tossing-up for the *œil de bœuf* apartment, after an amiable contest, in which each gentleman had shown himself equally anxious to become the proprietor of that sprightly chamber. It was awarded by destiny to Mr. Pinchbold. Having got into the ball-room apartment, the only wish that could be formed by any person of sane mind would naturally be to get out of it as soon, and keep out of it as long, as possible; so the two friends just saw their luggage deposited, and then set off to examine the town and its environs. They had previously learnt from the landlady herself—for they put no confidence in the announcements of the waiter—that there would be some dinner to be had at six o'clock, or as near that time as the necessity of providing for the officers of the regiment would permit.

From the heights that overhang Montereau our travellers looked on the first really fine view which they had seen in the course of their journey. It is at this point that the Seine and the Yonne unite their waters, the two rivers becoming one in the very heart of the town, and flowing on to Paris in combined strength. The windings of these two rivers, as they approach the town from distant quarters, the great stream formed by their junction rolling away into the distance to Paris, Havre, the sea—these things in a landscape which was of itself full of beauties, were well worth a struggle to the top of the great hill above the town to see. To one of the branches of the great river which lay at their feet a special interest attached in the eyes of the travellers, for near, or along the banks of the Yonne, their route lay for many miles, and, till they reached Auxerre, they would scarcely quit its course for half an hour.

Mr. Fudge and his companion strained their eyes in the direction in which they were to go, as if it was indicated by the river's course; and both of them felt now more sanguine than they had ever done before as to the chances of reaching their journey's end. The resources already shown by the gallant Blinkers were, indeed, very encouraging. Except on the first day, when, coming from the Paris livery-stables, where he had been probably half starved, the little Irishman had done his work with ease; and though it may be said that sixty miles in three days was no great achievement, it was yet all that our travellers had proposed to do, and that was something. Besides, to those who are acquainted with horses and their capabilities, it is well known that this regular *daily* demand on their

resources is a tremendous trial, and requires a very different amount of strength to what is sufficient for a park-hack or a brougham-horse about town. The fact is that Blinkers, with his deep chest and short loins, was built for work; while his diet which, now that he was on the road, was a very full one, consisting of twelve litres of oats daily, kept him at concert-pitch perpetually. It is astonishing what diet will do for a horse. On those days when Mr. Fudge had been able to see Blinkers fed himself, he could always trace a greater degree of alacrity in his pace and general conduct than when he had been obliged to leave the little horse to the mercy of officials. Often would this humane gentleman get up in the dark (even when the carriage was not to start till late in the day) simply that he might go down to the stable and see the Irishman take his oats. And it was necessary to be thus early, for unless he was in the stable the very first thing in the morning, the ostler would inform him, when he appeared there, that his horse had already been fed. Mr. Fudge could then only look helplessly into the empty manger, and think to himself, "*there may have been oats in it this morning, but there may not.*"

Mr. Fudge and Mr. Pinchbold descended from the hill, and re-entering the town, regained their hotel in good, or rather in *too* good, time for dinner. In the room devoted to the civilians who were in the hotel there was, it is true, a cloth laid, but not a sign of anything to eat; while, to make it more aggravating still, a succession of dishes were being continually carried across the yard to the greater saloon, which had been appropriated to the use of the military.

The dinner, when it did at last arrive, was not a fascinating meal. The following description of it is found in Mr. Pinchbold's notes:—

“Pasta soup, very greasy and tallowy, so that the little circular pasta devices floating about in it suggested irresistibly that the soup was made of candles, the grease of which was imperfectly melted, the morsels looking like bits of tallow which had ‘guttered down.’ The odour of this soup remained in the room during the whole time of dinner.

“The soup removed, a dish was placed before us containing two small cutlets of a horrible light grey tint; they had probably made the circuit of the officers' table, and been universally rejected. They were followed by a dish containing two fag ends of the spleen or some other part of the entrails of some animal, name unknown, and some potatoes, characterized by an unhallowed sweetness, and a taste of perfumery.

“The next course looked more hopeful at a distance, but, on a closer inspection, turned out to be a little horrid joint of veal, unnaturally tender to the knife, and with curious *rosy* patches, or spots, in the lean. By its side, on the same plate, an object that looked like a haycock, composed of wet and decayed vegetable matter, which had a combined flavour of cheese, train-oil, and a cabbage which had been staying six weeks in the country with a friend—whose name might, or might not have been Dunghill.”

It was possibly in consequence of the unsavoury, and perhaps unwholesome, nature of the meal whose principal characteristics have been thus indicated by Mr. Pinchbold, that the determination of that gentleman and of his friend and companion Mr. Fudge, was

lashed up to that point when the adoption of an extreme course becomes justifiable, if not praiseworthy. At all events, some very remarkable results came of that squalid meal, as the reader shall hear.

"This dinner," said Mr. Pinchbold, putting down his fork, at the conclusion of an attack on the haycock just mentioned, "is wholly uneatable; I am as hungry as when I sat down."

"I am *more* hungry," replied Mr. Fudge, despairingly.

"What are we to do?" inquired Mr. Pinchbold.

"I don't know," was Mr. Fudge's answer, "unless," he added, in the tone of one who makes a suggestion which he has no belief in, "unless an omelette——"

"I am sick to death of omelettes," Mr. Pinchbold interrupted.

"And so am I," answered his friend; after which both gentlemen sat speechless for some moments.

"I'll tell you what," Mr. Pinchbold broke out at last, "why shouldn't we cook something ourselves?"

"Cook something ourselves," repeated Mr. Fudge, meditatively; "at the tripod which we bought at Malaise, I suppose you mean?"

"I do," said Mr. Pinchbold.

"We have no charcoal," said Mr. Fudge.

"We can get some," replied Mr. Pinchbold.

"We have no meat," argued Mr. Fudge; "no vegetables, no water."

"There is water in the bottle in your room," Mr. Pinchbold persisted, "and everything else we can get in the town, if we set out at once." And the enthusiastic gentleman started up, and clapping his hat

upon his head, professed himself to be ready for the enterprise.

"We will try," said Mr. Fudge, at length, thoroughly roused; and they were both soon in the street.

At the corner of Brook-street and Bond-street, there is a meat emporium, where symmetrical legs and haunches of mutton, neatly floured and daintily trimmed, hang in rows above one's head inviting the carving-knife.

In the French metropolis, there is a marvellous establishment in the Rue Tronchet, where there is a separate department for every kind of meat, and even for the different joints of the same animal, where an official, seated by the door, hands you a card as you enter with the names of the different meats printed on it, and space left in columns for the weight, the price per pound, to be filled in after the purchase is made; where you are handed over by solemn and mustachioed men, from one to another, till you reach the department you are in search of, where a fierce gentleman cuts off your two pounds of the loin, and trims it with the air of an artist, where three matrons sit on a raised platform, like justices on a bench, and receiving your card and your money, return you the first receipted with a stamp; and where, finally, as you go out, the gentleman who gave you the card on entering receives it again, and secretes it in a place of security.

Now those persons who form their ideas of a butcher's shop from that first mentioned, in Bond-street, or who, having visited Paris, take their impressions of a French butchery from that in the Rue Tronchet, would be singularly disappointed and surprised were

they requested to choose a joint from the shop of the chief butcher in the town of Montereau.

To begin with, it was not easy to find it at all. The town was, when Mr. Fudge and his friend emerged into its main street, in a state of the profoundest and most discouraging darkness, and our two Englishmen wandered and stumbled along in ineffectual search for the object of their desires, approaching every window where any light, even the most feeble, appeared, in the desperate hope that it might come from a butcher's shop. There was nothing of the kind, however, to be seen, and they were at length driven in desperation to take advice, or, in other words, to consult the first responsible-looking native whom they saw, as to what their course was to be. By this gentleman, who was himself in the black pudding and sausage line, they were directed to turn aside out of the main street, to which they had hitherto confined themselves, and following a certain narrow lane which led down towards the river, to inquire for one Lenoir, who kept a butchery.

"That man is sending us to our doom," said Mr. Pinchbold, as he and his friend descended the sausage-vendor's steps. "I have a presentiment that Mr. Lenoir is a murderer; that his butchery is a human butchery, and that he lives near the river for the convenience of disposing of——"

This speech was delivered in broken tones, by reason of the numerous stumbles, the sudden descents from paving-stones to puddles, and the plunges from puddles back again to paving-stones, by which the speaker's progress was impeded. It was suddenly interrupted by an exclamation from Mr. Fudge, who,

having brought his head into violent contact with an angle of masonry, rightly conceived that they had arrived at the corner of the lane indicated by the sausage-man.

"This must be the street," said Mr. Fudge, picking up his hat, which had been knocked off. "I can see the river gleaming at the end of it. I wish we had brought the lantern," he added, as Mr. Pinchbold bumped heavily against him.

"I wish we had brought Mazard," replied Mr. Pinchbold; "his barking might have awakened suspicion, and led, at least, to the avenging of our assassination."

Mazard had been left, tied up in the inn, Mr. Pinchbold being afraid that the dog might yet, in spite of the distance from Paris, make some attempt to escape, if taken out in a strange place in the dark.

Our adventurers had now arrived opposite a little sort of hovel, which was distinguished from the others in the row of which it formed one, by the dim gleam of a single candle; there was a sort of wooden shelf just inside, and level with the window-sill, and on it was a bullock's heart, a strip of mutton fat, a marrow-bone (empty), and half a kidney. A dark form, distantly resembling the decapitated head of some member of the animal creation, loomed faintly in the background, and on an execution block in the middle of this attractive apartment, was a terrific axe. The block was also decorated with several formidable-looking and pointed knives, stuck symmetrically all round it.

"Those knives," said Mr. Pinchbold, "carry out my idea."

"All butcher's shops are furnished with knives," argued Mr. Fudge.

"Not like this," retorted Mr. Pinchbold; "besides, it is evident that the shop is a mere blind. There is no meat in it."

"There is a bullock's heart, a strip of mutton, and the head of a—of a—"

"What do you desire?" said a voice, emanating from some one so immediately behind Mr. Pinchbold, that that gentleman sprung at least six inches into the air with a cry of horror.

The words were spoken in the bass clef, in the French language, and were uttered by no less a person than M. Lenoir himself, who had been standing all the time on the other side of the narrow lane, admiring his own shop.

"What have you got?" inquired Mr. Fudge.

The butcher drew a pointed instrument from his girdle, and struck it straight into the centre of the bullock's heart.

"It is too large," said Mr. Fudge, with a slight shudder; "and," he added, scarcely knowing what he said, "too juicy; we should like some mutton."

The butcher caught the strip of fat, of which mention has been made, on the top of the pointed instrument, and held it up admiringly, as if it was drapery.

"It is too fat," said Mr. Fudge.

"Tell him," suggested Mr. Pinchbold, desperately, "that we want a little bit to boil."

Mr. Fudge communicated his friend's suggestion. The butcher went into his shop and disappeared down a trap-door at the back part of it. Presently the

carcass of an entire sheep appeared in the mouth of the trap, and ascending gradually, disclosed a pair of human legs—those of the butcher—beneath it. It was an immense animal, and the butcher deposited it on the block with a sigh of relief.

“Don’t cut up a sheep on my account,” interposed Mr. Fudge. But he spoke to little purpose; M. Lenoir had split the deceased animal down the centre of its vertebræ in no time. Selecting one of its halves, he marked out with his knife about a quarter of the whole carcass, and said, laconically—

“About that much?”

“No,” said Mr. Fudge; “much less.”

“So much?” said the butcher, indicating about six pounds.

“Too much,” reiterated Mr. Fudge.

The butcher came down to about five pounds, but Mr. Fudge still protested that it was too much. It ended in his requesting that the smallest portion possible should be cut off, and even then the friends staggered away under a tolerable load.

Having next secured some vegetables, which were sold by the butcher’s next-door neighbour—an old lady who kept them in a pan under her bed—our two friends now stumbled back again to the inn. The meat and vegetables were concealed under Mr. Fudge’s loose coat and in Mr. Pinchbold’s pockets, and were hid very successfully. It is true that Mr. Pinchbold dropped a large carrot as he passed the bar of the inn, and just as the eye of the landlady was upon him, but he had the presence of mind to mutter some general assertion about “carrots being good for horses,” and as they were going in the direction of the stable to get

the cooking-basket out of the carriage, this jesuitical remark seemed plausible enough.

It is astonishing how far you may carry the preparation for some great act without perceiving that some indispensable portion of the paraphernalia required for the realization of your project is wanting. Mr. Fudge had set up the tripod in a convenient position close to the window of his apartment; he had filled the saucepan with water, and had hacked with a pocket-knife the mutton into such a joint as there was some hope of squeezing into the pot—Mr. Fudge had accomplished all this, and Mr. Pinchbold had scraped half-a-dozen carrots and as many turnips, before either gentleman had remembered that they had no fuel.

It was a baffling thought, but our friends had advanced too far to recede, and it was not long before Mr. Fudge—with his lantern in his hand this time—was off once more in search of a certain kind of charcoal called "*braises*," which is made of something so light, that it seems rather to be the pith of wood than wood itself, and which ignites and burns much more freely than the ordinary kind of charcoal. Mr. Fudge was not long absent, and on his return with an immense parcel full of braises, there was nothing wanted in the preparations for the great enterprise in which our intrepid voyagers had pledged themselves to engage.

It is extraordinary how very far a gentleman with a saucepan, a fire, water, meat, and vegetables, all ready to his hand, may be from being in a position to produce a dish of boiled mutton. A kind of paralysis was upon both our friends now that they

found themselves surrounded by all the requisite machinery for cooking, and neither of them for some time was able, if his life had depended on it, to advance a step farther.

"Now then," said Mr. Pinchbold, "everything seems ready."

"Yes," replied his friend, "everything. Would you like to begin?"

"No," said Mr. Pinchbold, carelessly, "no; you had better begin."

"Yes, that's all very well," answered Mr. Fudge; "but how *do* you begin?"

"I thought you knew," said Mr. Pinchbold, wildly.

"There are one or two points," replied his friend, "about which I am in doubt, and they are rather important. I don't know whether we ought to put the meat into the water cold, and then let it warm gradually, or to boil the water first and then put the meat in it. Then I am not sure, supposing the meat once in the water, how long it ought to boil, nor am I certain whether, indeed, it ought to boil at all."

"Boiled mutton surely ought to boil," remarked Mr. Pinchbold, sententiously.

"There is a detestably mysterious and indefinite process called *simmering*," replied Mr. Fudge, "which I believe is at the very root of all cookery, but for the life of me I can't tell what it is."

"I should think, from the sound," observed Mr. Pinchbold, "that it was a kind of hissing bubble."

"Well, we must try," said Mr. Fudge, desperately; and in went the meat into a saucepanful of cold water, in which a quantity of chopped carrots and turnips were already soaking.

"It *looks* queer," said Mr. Pinchbold, looking at the raw meat as it lay at the bottom of the saucepan with a suspicious air; "I hope it's all right."

The usual results of amateur cookery began now to develop themselves. Everything that Mr. Fudge touched burnt him, and everything that touched Mr. Pinchbold scalded *him*. The two gentlemen got in each other's way, differed in opinion as to the progress of the mutton, became hot and irritable. Then the mutton, one minute ago in tepid water, boiled over the moment that it was left. Moreover, it wholly declined to simmer. If it was placed upon the fire it boiled in the most furious manner, while if it was removed and cunningly balanced on the edge of the chafing-dish and the rim of a washing-basin, it became stone cold. To let it boil was the only thing to be done under these circumstances, and boil it did with a vengeance.

"It has suddenly changed colour," said Mr. Fudge, after inspecting progress for about the fiftieth time; "I wonder if it is done?"

"Probe it with the point of your knife," suggested Mr. Pinchbold. "Is it soft?" he added, as his friend obeyed this injunction.

"No," replied Mr. Fudge, "I can't say it is."

"Ah, then," said Mr. Pinchbold, who, finding that his friend was ignorant upon the subject, became quite authoritative in tone, "then you may depend upon it that it isn't done. 'Boil till tender' is a direction I am sure I have read in some cookery-book."

"If boiling will do it," said Mr. Fudge, mistrustfully, "we are all right."

He might well say so. The pace at which that mutton was boiling was something without a parallel in the annals of cookery. It leapt, it bubbled, it knocked its own lid off, it nearly put the fire out, it spirted bits of hard carrot out into the room, it almost bounced out of the pot itself, but somehow or other it did not get soft.

"It is getting harder," said Mr. Fudge, after probing the meat again.

"Boil till tender," repeated Mr. Pinchbold; and away they went again.

At the end of another quarter of an hour, Mr. Fudge probed once more, and at the expiration of twice that time the mutton was decidedly considerably harder than ever.

"Perhaps it has boiled too much," suggested Mr. Pinchbold.

"It seems highly probable," said Mr. Fudge, who had just scalded his mouth in tasting the liquor of the mutton, and was rather snappish in consequence.

"We had better 'dish up,'" remarked Mr. P.

There was only one difficulty about "dishing up," and that consisted in the absence of a dish. However, the lid of the saucepan was propped up in a dexterous manner, so as to supply this deficiency as well as might be, and the mutton was speedily harpooned up out of the depths of the pot and placed upon table—

"Hallo," cried Mr. Pinchbold, on first catching sight of it; "I am afraid this wont do."

The aspect of the meat certainly justified Mr. P.'s alarm. It was reduced to about one-third of its original dimensions, was quite white, and presented a

shrivelled appearance, precisely similar to that which characterizes the arms of a washerwoman after a hard day of it among the soapsuds.

"Uneatable!" remarked Mr. Pinchbold, after an ineffectual effort to swallow the portion of flesh which Mr. Fudge had managed after much muscular exertion to hack off for his benefit.

"Uneatable!" reciprocated Mr. Fudge, after a similar failure on his own part.

"How are the vegetables?" inquired Mr. Pinchbold.

"If they were blocks of steel," his friend answered, "they could not be harder."

"And the broth?" asked Mr. Pinchbold, once more.

"Seems all to have boiled away," replied Mr. Fudge, looking into the pot, "except a little drop at the bottom."

"And that is burnt," remarked Mr. Pinchbold, tasting the liquor that was left, with an ivory teaspoon.

The two friends sat for some time gazing at each other in speechless and powerless bewilderment, while Mazard disposed with some difficulty of the boiled mutton. The dog's appetite had manifestly improved (as had his whole demeanour) since the scene in the forest, and by the intense interest and joy with which he had watched the whole of the boiling process just described, it became evident that he was fast coming to the conclusion that he was still in the "cook and confectionery" line, and that the cooking transaction of which he had just been a witness was in some way connected with the business.

"Is there nothing else we could try?" inquired the unhappy Mr. Pinchbold, who was sitting nibbling at his bread, the incorporation of famine.

Mr. Fudge cast a glance round the room, and his eye lit upon the frying-pan, which, as well as the saucepan just used, and a small gridiron, formed part of the cooking apparatus originally purchased at Malaise. Mr. Fudge remembered that among the stores laid in previous to their start was a large piece—nearly half a fitch—of bacon.

Mr. Fudge rose from his place, and advancing to the provision basket, applied his nose to the bacon, which was there safe enough. Having expressed his approval of the condition of this important article of food, Mr. F. brought it to the table, and having sharpened his knife, by putting it and that of Mr. Pinchbold through a sort of frantic broadsword exercise, proceeded to cut two symmetrical slices or rashers from the fitch. This done, Mr. Fudge next gave his attention to the fire, and having added some more fuel, and waited during its complete ignition, he placed the two slices of bacon in the frying-pan, and the frying-pan in turn upon the fire. There was a moment's pause, and then during a death-like silence a faint sound composed of something between a hiss and a crackle broke upon the ears of our two famishing friends. At this moment a faint and cannibalic smile might have been observed upon the features of Mr. Pinchbold, and it was not long before a similar expression became developed on those of Mr. Fudge. Presently Mr. Pinchbold indulged in a gentle sniff.

"What a delicious smell!" he said, in a whisper.

"Don't speak," replied Mr. Fudge, in a similar tone.

The hissing had now gained considerably in force and volume, and a delicious fragrance filled the apartment. Mr. Fudge turned the bacon.

"One side done," said that gentleman. Another long pause, more hissing and crackling, and Mr. Fudge spoke again.

"Hold your plate," he said.

Mr. Pinchbold held his own plate, and then he held Mr. Fudge's plate, and then when each plate had received its burden, each gentleman sat down, and using a bit of crust as a fork—it does very well—and a clasp-knife to cut the bacon, gave himself over to the full enjoyment of the moment.

"More!" said Mr. Pinchbold, having finished his rasher.

"More!" cried Mr. Fudge, seizing the frying-pan.

Who shall describe the delight of that meal. Led up to by a long course of French cookery, latterly not of the best kind; immediately preceded by the failure of the boiled mutton, that dish of bacon seemed to both our travellers the most delicious thing they had ever tasted. The fact is that there is something pre-eminently agreeable about a furtive meal. The boy at school who partakes of a three-cornered tart under the lid of his desk, or the lady traveller who nibbles at a sandwich half-concealed in her reticule, both of them get more satisfaction out of the respective viands they consume, than they would derive from far more savoury matters eaten openly.

The worst thing, however, about furtive cookery is the difficulty of disposing of the fragments, the bits of

fat and bone which remain when the meal is over, encrusted in a disgusting coagulation of cold grease. Our amateurs, after a long consultation on this subject, were compelled to have recourse to that last refuge of the desperate—a sheet of newspaper. Into this the horrible remains of the supper were remorselessly pushed, and the whole parcel, bound up with string was placed on the window-sill that the night-air might ventilate it.

“It is like the ‘body,’ after a murder,” said Mr. Pinchbold; “what are we to do with it to-morrow!”

“We must take it with us,” replied Mr. Fudge, “and when we have arrived at some spot where no human eye can mark our proceedings, we will cast it down by the wayside and fly from the spot with all the speed we can make.”

It was well for our travellers that the enormous amount of bustle and confusion caused by the number of officers staying in the house, absorbed all attention, and kept the staff of the inn too much employed to have any leisure for watching the proceedings of Mr. Fudge and his friend. The inn-staff was not a large one, consisting, according to Mr. Pinchbold, of a patron—the name by which the landlord is always called—a patron who was a nonentity, and who waited at table; a horrid old woman, the patron’s wife, who governed the establishment; the garçon already mentioned, who promised everything and performed nothing, and who was incessantly called to order by the cracked voice of the landlady; an execrably sulky chambermaid, and an ostler to match. All these people were kept in an active state of attendance on the military, and we repeat that it was well it was so,

as the mere smell produced by the performances of our amateur cooks was so powerful that it must have infallibly betrayed them if anybody had approached their corner of the house. Even as it was a certain old officer who was stumbling along the ball-room on his way to bed was distinctly heard by Mr. Pinchbold to sniff several times in a sharp and suspicious manner, and then to utter these remarkable words:

“Hold, hold! one would say that the kitchen must be near here!”

CHAPTER III.

Conveys Mr. Fudge and his Friend from Montereau to Sens. In the Course of their Journey their early Illusions on the Subject of happy Peasants and beautiful Vivandières are finally and for ever dispelled.

It was still dark—pitch dark—the next morning, when Mr. Fudge, who had slept through a succession of noises which might have awakened the Seven Sleepers themselves, was gradually aroused to a sense of consciousness by a combination of sounds which one would have thought insufficient to disturb the slumbers of the lightest sleeper in existence.

“What sounds were those?” Mr. Fudge asked himself, in his imperfectly awakened state; “where was he? Was this delicious music that awakened the night echoes a reality or a dream?” It *was* music, soft, far off, *so* far off that no single instrument could be discerned, only a mellowed harmony of sound, softened, as it seemed, quite as much by the darkness as by the distance. Gradually as the sleeper, still but half-awake, continued to listen, he seemed to detect that the sounds which held him in such rapt delight were drawing nearer. Then it was not long before he was able to distinguish that this harmony was made up of many instruments, and that one of these which ap-

peared to keep the rest together, and measure out the time to all, was a drum.

Mr. Fudge *would* not wake, he would not admit what reason told him, that the sounds he listened to were produced by the band of the regiment which was quartered in Montereau, that the troops had been collected together in another part of the town, and were marching past the Grand Monarque in their way out of it. All this Mr. Fudge knew to be the case, but still he would not have it. He kept his eyes tightly closed, and his mind's eye was sealed also to all acknowledgment of the facts of the world outside. Let him listen to that music as to some mysterious thing that he could not account for. Listening to it so, it did him good. There was not one high emotion, not one noble aspiration which had ever had possession of his mind that did not seem to return at this time, bringing such sense of refreshment with it as always follows from the stirring of the better purpose within us. But was this all? Were there no other depths reached by those sounds? With the force of a dream—and greater force there is none—there came upon him a crowd of ancient memories, inhabitants of some storehouse of the mind, the gates of which that music had unlocked. No recollection of his boyish days, no remembrance of early manhood, of that brightest moment of life when the world wears such a pleasant face that we fancy it has not got a single frown, or even a grave look in store for us, not one memory of this time but came back then and lived its time again.

But the music gets fainter. The dull tramp of measured footsteps which accompanied it is heard no

longer, and soon the larger and lighter objects in the room become pronounced sufficiently for Mr. Fudge to know that another day is breaking, a day when he may lay up new and happier memories for the future that is yet in store.

Our travellers had a long journey before them, so when Mazard came trotting out of Mr. Pinchbold's room into that occupied by Mr. Fudge as if on purpose to call him, that gentleman jumped out of bed, though it was still too dark to see distinctly, and called aloud to Mr. Pinchbold to follow his example.

It was just eight o'clock when our two friends drove away from the door of the Grand Monarque. The morning was bitter cold but dry, and everything seemed to promise a fine day. Mr. Fudge and his companion were just felicitating themselves upon this circumstance, and were also in a high state of glee at the success of the cooking operations of the previous night, when they heard some one calling loudly after them.

Mr. Fudge immediately pulled up, and he had hardly done so when the garçon of the hotel, quite out of breath with the pace he had been running at, came up to the side of the carriage, and respectfully handed in a *parcel* which he said they had left behind them at the hotel. Whether it was that the pace at which the waiter had been running had disarranged the package, or that it had been originally but indifferently secured, or, which is still more likely, that the thing had been pre-arranged by the hotel authorities as a revenge for an implied insult to the establishment—from whichever of these causes what we are going to relate arose, it is useless and impertinent to

inquire—but certain it is that at the moment when the garçon respectfully handed the parcel into the carriole, it came loose, and the whole of its contents, consisting of half-a-dozen bones of neck of mutton imperfectly picked, a large piece of the more worthless portion of the same joint in its normal state of rawness, several carrots, some turnips, and some rind of bacon, all these things came rolling and tumbling out one over another on the apron of the carriole.

There was nothing for it in such a case as this but flight. Mr. Pinchbold, who was very sensitive on the subject of appearances, sunk back with a hollow groan, and Mr. Fudge, without paying any attention to the malignant apologies of the garçon, who exclaimed at sight of the broken victuals just described, "Ah! the provisions of Monsieur;" Mr. Fudge, we say, started his horse as rapidly as he was able, scattering the remains of the furtive meal in all directions, and leaving the waiter to make whatever comments on this tremendous incident the peculiar nature of his mind might suggest to him.

The archbishopric of Sens for a night resting-place, and the village of Pont-sur-Yonne for the mid-day baiting, this was the programme of our travellers' day. The whole distance from Montereau to Sens was about twenty-seven miles, and the village just named broke it at something more than half way. It was a glorious morning, the first early chill soon passed away, and the sun blazed out with almost summer force. It was at such times as these that the full enjoyableness of the enterprise in which our two Englishmen were engaged made itself felt. It was at such times as these that this journey among the de-

serted post-roads of France seemed even to surpass all that they had anticipated from it. Deserted, indeed, these roads were, even more than either Mr. Fudge or his friend had expected. It was sometimes almost awful to go so far, and travel so long as they did without encountering a single soul, without meeting or overtaking a single vehicle. The roads seemed hardly worth keeping up with the traffic so completely withdrawn from them, and the cantonniers or road-menders, who were stationed at rare intervals along the way, looked up in astonishment as the travellers passed them by.

How slowly they wound along those "deserted roads," but not *too* slowly. At every turn of the wheel almost, some fresh source of pleasure or interest seemed to reveal itself, and not once since that journey had begun had ennui or weariness been felt by either one of the two gentlemen, whose journey was such a subject of surprise to all who heard of it.

There is always something to mitigate human enjoyment, and it must be confessed that this something on this particular morning was furnished by Blinkers. Nothing could exceed the aggravation of his behaviour. The day was so warm that the flies, which are particularly venomous in autumn, beset the little horse rather closely. This might be some excuse for a certain amount of irritability, but not for such frantic proceedings as those in which this animal indulged. Not only did he kick at his stomach with his near hind-leg so incessantly that Mr. Fudge fully expected that he would lame himself by bringing his foot into such constant collision with the hard road as he did after every kick. Not only did he do the same with

his fore-foot also, but he would absolutely every now and then make an attempt to stop, in order more completely to devote himself to the conflict with his enemies. What made it worse, too, was that Mr. Pinchbold would insist that there was something wrong with the harness, and would get down to inspect it, and to try whether certain alterations in the arrangement of some of the straps, would not, as he expressed it, "make things go more comfortably." But as Mr. P.'s alterations had always to be restored to their original state, his interference in this matter was not productive of much benefit, and had even this additional ill-effect, that Blinkers finding his misconduct rewarded by an occasional stoppage of some duration while Mr. Pinchbold made his experiments, became more outrageous than ever in his goings-on.

Mr. Fudge was so tired of struggling with this aggravating little animal that it was quite a relief to him when, at about twelve o'clock, the first few houses of the village where they were to rest showed but a short way off. It was a dismal, grey-looking place this Pont-sur-Yonne, and was not to be reclaimed from its innate melancholy even by the presence of a troop of soldiers picqueted in its dismal *Place*. There is surely nothing comparable to a French village for depressing the human mind. There are in our own country to be found here and there certain small towns and villages which may be regarded as no mean adepts in the art of guiding man to self-destruction, but the worst of them is a cheery and frolicsome residence in comparison to the average of French villages. The first person you meet on entering one of these hamlets is invariably an idiot, and the second, who is always

a hideous old woman, you would set down as the most ancient inhabitant, if it were not that you go on meeting still older ones as you advance. Old women, idiots, and children everywhere, till at last you conclude that all the younger portion of the peasantry must have gone up to Paris to figure in that tremendous corps of impostors who come capering on to the stage to assist at the nuptials of the faithful Pierre and Pauline, the Pride of that Stage Village which has no existence upon earth.

A hideous vivandière, attached to the regiment which was picqueted in the Grande Place, was going from house to house trying to get provisions, and though she did not seem to be particularly successful, she had at least got, as it appeared at first, all that was to be had. Mr. Fudge and his friend were altogether rejected at the principal inn of the place; and at the second they were informed that, though it was possible their horse might be put up, it was quite out of the question that they themselves could be provided with so much as a crust of bread or a cup of *café au lait*.

"Hang it," cried Mr. Fudge, as this repulse, delivered by a virago of a woman, reached his ears, "what fictions the world is deluded by. Why are vivandières supposed to be pretty, mine host or hostess to be jolly, and peasants a picturesque and happy race, with cherry ribbons in their straw hats, dancing after a waggon full of grapes? Look at the reality. Look at those peasants; were ever any human beings so squalid, so hideous, so sulky, so depressed? Look at that vivandière, with her glazed hat like a wherryman, her round shoulders with a paletot over them,

and her hideous and misshapen trousers peeping out from under her petticoat; was there ever such a monster of ugliness? And then, for a jolly hostess, what do you think of this scowling lady, who will not let us into her house, who will give us nothing to eat or drink, and whose inn looks about as festive as an undertaker's shop on a wet Sunday afternoon? It is time these delusions were exposed. It is time——"

"Time," Mr. Pinchbold interposed, "that Blinkers was put up before he has kicked his shoes off his feet in making useless plunges at those detestable flies. Come, we must put him in the stable at any rate, and perhaps the landlady may thaw by-and-by; we have evidently taken her at an unlucky moment."

Mr. Fudge followed his friend's advice. Blinkers was handed over to an infirm and paralytic ostler, who, however, proved so unequal to the charge that Mr. Fudge was obliged himself to interpose, and unharness and feed this irritable animal with his own hands. This done, Mr. Pinchbold devoted himself to the work of fascinating the landlady, and with such success that when he rejoined his friend, it was with the agreeable information that this previously unmanageable lady had promised them a meal of some kind or other (though what, she declined to say) within the comparatively brief space of half an hour.

Mr. Fudge and Mr. Pinchbold walked up the inn-yard towards the stable in which Blinkers had been placed, rather uncertain how to fill up the intervening time. They found the little horse and Mazard together; the former eating his oats, and the latter engaged in philanthropically watching him. Indeed, between those two animals a fast and cordial friendship

was rapidly becoming established. It was not long after the second start from Paris that Mr. Fudge witnessed from a place of concealment the commencement of their acquaintance, the ceremony having been inaugurated by a lengthened smelling on the part of each animal of the other's nose—a proceeding from which they appeared to derive the most vivid satisfaction, and to conceive the highest possible opinion of each other's qualities from that moment.

The sight of Mazard reminded our two friends of the necessity they were under of renewing that attempt to beguile the dog into a return to his old performance which had been brought to so sudden a termination in the Forest of Fontainebleau. Now was the very time. The inn-yard was deserted, the stable was a retired place, the ostler was gone home to his dinner, and there were no signs of life about the place. Never could there be a better opportunity of recommencing Mazard's education than at that moment. So the two friends went to work again with a will, and in a very few minutes everything was ready for the undertaking. They were not interrupted this time; and when the transaction, which was carried on exactly as on the previous occasion, was brought to an end, Mr. Fudge took Mazard aside *and offered him a sou*. The dog instantly took it, and, returning to where Mr. Pinchbold was standing by the side of his shop, went through the whole of his performance exactly as of old, and finished by devouring the cake which he had come by in so honourable a manner with immense appetite and relish.

From this moment the complete and perfect restoration of Mazard to his former health and spirits might

be said to date. From this moment both Mr. Pinchbold and Mr. Fudge lost all fear with regard to his attempts to escape, and all precautions for his security were from this time forth wholly abandoned.

By the time that Mazard's performance was concluded, the meal which had been preparing for our travellers was ready, and they were requested to walk into the *salle-à-manger*, and partake of it. The *salle-à-manger* was on the ground floor, and its entrance was on one side of the great arch which led into the stable-yard, the kitchen being on the other. The shutters of this room were firmly closed, as nobody ever seemed to want it; and when they had at last, with some difficulty, been forced open by the landlady, they disclosed one of the most dismal apartments which the mind of man can picture to itself. A room left in the condition in which it was last used, with the ashes yet in the grate, the crumbs of an ancient meal still upon the floor, and the stains of wine yet upon the table, must necessarily always be a melancholy spectacle, even when the walls are not, as they were in this case, painted in imitation of blocks of grey stone, cemented together with green mortar.

The landlady had provided a sweetbread, an excellent omelette, fresh grapes, and some very tolerable wine, as a repast for our travellers; and this ferocious woman turned out, after all, to be really most amiable, and anxious to secure the comfort of her guests. The excellence of the sweetbread was, indeed, such as those who have only partaken of this viand as it is handed to them at a London dinner-party, where it sometimes does duty for the fourth or fifth time, can form but little idea. A calf had been slaughtered, it

seemed, for the benefit of the soldiers, and all of it had been secured before the arrival of Messrs. Fudge and Pinchbold, with the exception of the sweetbread—too expensive a luxury for any one to venture on.

The troops were out of Pont-sur-Yonne long before our Englishmen had concluded their meal; and when the two friends strolled out into the street everything was quiet, and the place in its normal condition of desertion and gloom. It was two hours afterwards that Mr. Fudge and his friend recommenced their journey; and the soldiers had got such a start that they never overtook them. The streets of Sens were full of the troops when our travellers arrived there, and one of the two hotels of which this fine old town has to boast was crammed with officers to such an extent that Mr. Fudge and his companion at once determined that they would take up their quarters at the other, which was called the Hotel de Paris, and had a quiet and comfortable appearance which was very attractive.

Our travellers were altogether so well pleased with what they saw of Sens in taking a stroll about the town, that they came to the determination of making a stay of two days there. There were other reasons besides the attractiveness of the place for coming to this decision. The next day was Saturday, and if they went on to Joigny they would have to spend the Sunday at that place. This, if, which was not unlikely, the inn turned out a failure, would be disagreeable enough; while at Sens they were sure of tolerable quarters for the Sunday's rest. Besides all this, both Mr. Fudge and his friend felt that it was wise to accustom Blinkers to travelling by degrees, and not to

try him too much at first; so it was arranged that they should sleep that night, and on the Saturday and Sunday nights as well, at Sens, and not start for Joigny till Monday morning.

There was, however, one more reason why the two friends felt strongly disposed for a halt. As they were passing through the market-place, their attention was attracted by a bill posted up against the wall containing an announcement of a fête, which was to commence the next day, and which was to combine every form of amusement known to man. It was to be a scene of enchantment and delight, and was to end with a display of fireworks, of which the following is the programme, literally translated:—

Commencement.

Six Round Atmospheric Curls of varied Colours.

First Discharge of Fire.

One Waving Sun, furnished with Fifteen varied Jets, and Fires of Colour.

Intermediate.

Three Artichokes; Three Volcanoes; Eighteen Flying Fusees.

Second Discharge of Fire.

One Hedge of young Hornbeam Trees; Six Chinese, with a Sun before them; Divers Jets.

Intermediate.

Four Whirlwinds; Twenty brilliant Torches, and Sixty Fusees of various Colours.

Third Discharge of Fire.

Portico of the Acropolis; Detonating Branch-candlesticks;
Twenty-five Chinese Jets; Pots of Stars of all Colours;
Thirty Flames of varied Shades.

Conclusion.

220 Fusees; 100 *Bombs of adieu*; Luminous rain of Diamonds, of
Gold and Silver.

FIRE OF BENGAL.

"I should like," said Mr. Pinchbold, when he had finished reading this announcement, "to see a firework which bears the designation of a 'hedge of young hornbeam trees.'"

"And I," replied Mr. Fudge, "should like to study the 'four whirlwinds, the detonating branch-candlesticks, and the bombs of adieu.'"

"We will go," said Mr. Pinchbold.

CHAPTER IV.

A short Chapter, in which our Travellers make the Acquaintance of the Hungry Man of Sens, and also that of a commercial Recluse, an inhabitant of the same City.

THE humble historian who has undertaken to record the progress from place to place of the two English gentlemen, David Fudge and Francis Pinchbold, has not set before himself the task of rivalling the admirably complete *Guide-Book of France*, published by Mr. John Murray, of Albemarle-street. Those who desire to know all about the city of Sens, or, indeed, any other of the places mentioned in this narrative, can get all the information they need from the excellent work just mentioned. Our business is with other matters than statistical returns, or even (except in rare instances) with descriptions of scenery, or of objects of interest. Our business is almost entirely with matters of a personal nature; in a word, this is the history of a certain portion of the lives of a couple of English gentlemen; it is *not* a gazetteer of France.

If to eat, drink, sleep, and be clothed, to inhale delicious air, and to be surrounded with beautiful scenery, were all, how happily and how easily might

a man live at a place like Sens. It is almost bewildering for one who groans under the preposterous costliness of life in the English metropolis, to think of what he might live for in one of these French country-towns—living better, too, and with more luxuries about him, than ever fall to the lot of the inhabitants of the great capitals. What milk, what eggs, what butter, what vegetables are to be had here, and to be had at what a rate of cheapness. Truly, the society of our fellow-men must be a precious thing to us that we sacrifice so much to obtain it—sacrifice so much, pay so much, bear so much. What fresh invigorating air, what clean, and wholesome, and unadulterated food, what country sights and sounds of loveliness, in the place of rows of brick-and-mortar, and din of vehicles, go to make up the sacrifice; and for the payment, what mines of gold in rent and taxes, in shameless cheating of rapacious tradesmen, extorting four times what the thing is worth, even if it *was* the thing, which it is not; while for what we have to *bear* for the sake of society, surely a volume might be filled with the catalogue of our endurances. We buy our friends dear, then; but those who have ever tried the experiment of dispensing with these expensive luxuries, will own that they are worth the price we pay for them.

From the diary of Mr. Pinchbold we are enabled to gather that the inn at the old town of Sens was one of the very best at which he and his friend put up in the course of their journey. It was here that, at the *table d'hôte* at which our friends dined on each day of their stay, the attention of both gentlemen seems to have been attracted by the unprecedented

and astounding voracity of one of the guests, whom Mr. Pinchbold speaks of as "the hungry man."

The hungry man, according to Mr. Pinchbold, presented in his personal appearance the most complete embodiment of famine which can be conceived. Everything about him was hollow; his eyes were sunk in deep hollow chasms, his cheeks had disappeared into the hollows formed by the malar bones above them, his temples were hollow, his stomach as he sat at table was hollow—nay, his very clothes seemed to partake of this same characteristic, for his shrunk neck was set into the collar of his coat (which came in direct contact with it) as in some dark cavern, and his wrists emerged from a great dark tubular sleeve that was more hollow than all.

There never was anything so terrific to behold as this man's appetite, nor ever anything more disconcerting than to see how little good his nutriment did him. The hungry man, too, had no enjoyment of his food; he was never occupied with the morsel on his plate, but always with the dish which was to follow next in order. His gaze was fixed firmly and devouringly upon this dish, whatever it might be, as it reposed in its place upon the table, and when it was removed to be carved and handed round, his eyes still pursued it to the side-table, and during its subsequent circuit, with frenzy in their aspect. Indeed, it was such evident anguish to him to see the contents of the dish diminishing sensibly as it slowly approached his part of the table, that we have reason to believe that the humane Mr. Pinchbold declined to partake of certain dishes of which the allowance seemed rather slender, out of a wish to save the hungry man from a serious crisis.

The hungry man was no new arrival at the inn at Sens. Indeed, to judge by the regularity with which he occupied the same place every day, and by the fact that his napkin was brought to him passed through a ring of his own, one would gather that he was a boarder at the inn as far as his meals were concerned, as was the case with several more of those who sat at table. All these persons were up to him, and would exchange winks and significant gestures as he took his place at table and *pinned his napkin up* under his chin. The *ancien militaire* retired, and having some municipal appointment—to whom by courtesy the head of the table was assigned—the commercial gentleman, who visited the town in his rounds so regularly that he was known to every one at table, the editor of the local paper, and the resident artist, all appeared to understand the peculiar humour of the hungry man, and would sometimes exercise their own wit at his expense—the artist especially executing the most hideous caricatures of this gaunt and voracious personage, and passing them to his friends to look at under the table-cloth.

“Give me some bread,” the hungry man would cry to the waiter.

“Give some to me, I entreat, before you take it to Monsieur Loupard,” the *ancien militaire* would interpose; “for,” he would add to a neighbour, “there will be no chance afterwards.”

“Hold, waiter!” the artist shouts, seeing a waiter about to hand a dish to the hungry man before, as in its usual course, it had made the round of the table—“hold; you are beginning at the wrong end; that civet de lièvre will come to an untimely fate. Bah! there

is absolutely some left!" he continues, as the dish is brought to him after the hungry man has made his attack upon it.

"Terrible times these," remarks the editor to a friend at the other end of the table, and keeping his eye on the famished Monsieur Loupard as he speaks; "I am told that in consequence of the bad harvest and the dearness of corn, the landlords of inns are going to charge extra for every piece of bread after the first half-dozen consumed by their pensionnaires."

"I have only had five pieces, at any rate," mutters the hungry man.

"The table-d'hôtes are to be served," says the commercial gentleman, humouring the joke, "with quarter rations."

"Then let us hope they will charge but a quarter of the price," says the hungry man, "and then M. le Militaire can go to four in the day."

At this there is a general roar.

"Some bread," cries the hungry man, as if it was a new idea.

"You will be charged extra," cries the artist; "it is the thirteenth piece."

"It is not true," says the hungry man.

"Search his pockets," suggests the artist, "for pieces of bread of to-day's baking."

"Search the pockets of Monsieur Pencil," retorts the hungry man, "for orders for portraits; you will not find many."

Here there is another roar, and the hungry man takes the opportunity to seize a dish which has not yet made the round of the table, but which had been imprudently put within his reach.

"Stop!" cries the commercial gentleman; "an infringement of all rules of the table."

"A blow struck at all social restraints," says another."

"What has become of etiquette?" shouts the artist.

"What has become of the dish?" shrieks another.

"Take it away from him!"

"Bring another dish!"

"The hateful proceeding!"

"The lawless depredator!"

"Gentlemen," interposed the hungry man, "I call you all to observe that I thought the dish had already made the round of the table, and been refused by all."

"Oh, yes!"

"A probable view of the matter, isn't it?"

This fierce badinage at the expense of the hungry man would last through a whole meal, the force of the storm rising, falling, and reviving again, as each new demand gave a new stimulant to the fury of this famished individual's assailants. And yet at the end of it all, and when the last available morsel of dessert had been secured, the hungry man would rise, and bowing all round the table, would make his exit with the same words with which he had sat down—

"Gentlemen all, I salute you!"

So much for the hungry man. For the other characteristics of the inn at Sens, we find that Mr. Pinchbold derives excessive comfort from the fact that his bedroom is situated over the *salle-à-manger*, and that the bell which the cook rings when dinner is ready is so near his window, that he could himself ring it with ease "in case anything should happen." His room faced the street, he adds (continuing his

usual mysterious description of his bedchamber), and is distinguished by a new arrangement of curtains for the bed, they being passed through an enormous mahogany ring, which is fastened into the ceiling, and concerning which Mr. Pinchbold seems to have some strange apprehension that it may turn out to be an engine of destruction.

As to the government of the inn, it appears to be chiefly, as usual, in the hands of the landlady, whom Mr. Pinchbold describes as young, neatly-dressed, and bustling, and not wholly destitute of an eye to the main chance. The husband is young also, but a person of no sort of importance in the house. A hard-worked girl appears to do all the work of the house, and to be excluded from all the meals of which the other domestics partake, when the guests have finished, in the *salle-à-manger*. There is a young garçon, wholly devoid of character, a reticent but capable ostler, and one more personage in connexion with the stable department who would appear to have made a powerful impression on Mr. Pinchbold's nerves.

This individual was nothing more than a hanger-on or helper about the stable, but his appearance was of so formidable a nature, and especially under the circumstances which attended Mr. Pinchbold's meeting with him, that a certain amount of panic on that gentleman's part may almost be considered as having been excusable.

It was on the evening when our travellers first arrived at Sens, that our esteemed friend had, in the absence of his usual companion, Mr. Fudge, (who had gone to the post-office with a letter,) bethought him of beguiling the time by paying a visit to Blinkers. Ac-

accompanied then by Mazard only, Mr. Pinchbold proceeded, lantern in hand, to the stable, and found his way to the stall in which Blinkers was enjoying an occasional nibble at such little heads of clover as were scattered among the hay in his manger, the little rascal playing with these after his regular meal, much as humanity does with a nut or a wine biscuit. It was just as Blinkers nearly pushed Mr. Pinchbold down by a sudden turn of his neck, on which our Englishman was leaning his elbow, and just as Mr. P. was remarking to himself, how fearful was the amount of power concentrated in the body of a horse, that a violent barking on the part of Mazard caused him to turn round, and look towards the stable door. There, in the full blaze of Mr. Pinchbold's lantern, and relieved additionally by the intense darkness behind him, stood one of the most terrific beings that the retina of this gentleman's eyes had ever reflected. This apparition, for such it seemed at first to be, was dressed in a white blouse, which garment, as well as the scant trousers, were full of rents and covered with patches. On its gigantic feet were a pair of equally gigantic sabots, and in its right hand was a terrific pitchfork, with long and glittering points of the most formidable description. The countenance of this spectral figure was in strict keeping with all the rest, its leading features being an immense hooked nose, and a pair of wild and staring eyes, which were fixed with terrific earnestness on Mr. Pinchbold, while a beard, of alternate black and white locks, of the mangiest description, made all the rest seem doubly horrible.

"Wh—wh—who—are you?" stammered Mr. Pinchbold as soon as any articulate sounds would come to

his aid. Mr. Pinchbold spoke in the French tongue, so that the above sentence ought by rights to have been rendered, "Qu' qu' qui êtes-vous?" but the fact is that the writer of these pages has a keen detestation of morsels of French in English books, and invariably suppresses such snatches of dialogue as much as possible.

Unexceptionable, however, as Mr. Pinchbold's French was in the present case, it seemed to have little effect on him to whom his question was addressed. The Spectre of the Stables made no reply, unless a slow and solemn nod of the head could be construed into one. The effect of this proceeding was so terrific that Mr. Pinchbold was really unable to stand it, and commenced a very unmistakeable movement, in a curved line, however, towards the door. As Mr. Pinchbold continued his retreat, the Spectre slowly revolved so as to keep him within its range of vision, till at last, our terror-stricken Englishman finding that step by step he had accomplished the circuit of the stable, and that the door was behind him, fairly turned tail, and rushing out of the building, fled across the stable-yard as hard as his legs would carry him, Mazard, who had been barking furiously all the while, keeping, like a faithful ally, in his master's rear, to protect his retreat.

From this time, the Spectre of the Stables—who turned out to be a deaf and dumb man, who acted as a sort of assistant groom, and was a harmless fellow enough—seemed perfectly to haunt Mr. Pinchbold's steps; go where he would, within the walls of the inn itself, or outside in the town, he was always meeting this man, and this man's eyes were always

fixed in the same terrible manner on Mr. Pinchbold. At last Mr. Pinchbold went the length of informing Mr. Fudge of what he suffered from the continual presence of this alarming being. He announced formally that now he felt that his doom was *really* sealed, that he was sure this man would conspire with some other ruffians, and would waylay them on their route when they left Sens for Joigny.

"We must do what we ought to have done long ago," said Pinchbold. "We must purchase a pistol."

It was in vain that Mr. Fudge tried to dissuade his friend from this, as he termed it, useless expenditure, Mr. Pinchbold was determined on the subject, and the pistol was bought; the Spectre looking through the windows of the gunsmith's shop while our Englishmen were engaged in making the purchase, and saluting Mr. Pinchbold with a hideous grin as he came out of the shop.

Outside the town of Sens, there is a fine grove of elms, which, extending for some distance, shades the public promenade, a sort of Boulevard leading down to the Yonne. At the bottom of this Boulevard, and close to the bank of the river, there is a little lane, at the corner of which the mysterious announcement "Tir de pistolet," proclaims, that at the bottom of this little alley there is a gallery for pistol practice. The next thing to do, after buying the pistol, was, naturally, to try it, so our two friends, having observed the notification in question, determined to proceed at once in search of the shooting-gallery.

Guided by a hand painted on the wall, and pointing towards a certain gateway not far down the lane, Mr. Fudge and his friend walked boldly up to this

portal, and looking in and finding nothing to impede their progress, entered without ceremony a green, old fashioned looking garden, with a fountain, a pair of painted wooden figures—a shepherd and shepherdess—and all sorts of other queer decorations, which made the place look none the less attractive that they were all tumbling to pieces, and in concert with the tangled and neglected look of the beds and paths with which the garden itself was interspersed. Pursuing one of these paths, which Mr. Fudge and his companion took at hazard, thinking it might lead to the “Tir,” our two Englishmen found themselves, after walking about half a dozen yards, in a little tangled thicket, and presently, without the least preparation, with their very noses in contact with the window of a little summer-house.

It seems incredible, it appears useless to relate so apparently outrageous a thing, but it is a fact, that in this summer house, remote from any other building, situated in the very heart of a neglected and deserted garden, whose very gates were not thought worth closing, and to which public attention was directed as a spot dedicated to pistol practice—in the summer-house, we say, a brisk, conventional, and middle-aged man of business was sitting at a desk working at accounts, and surrounded on all sides with ledgers and calf-bound account books, in which he was deeply immersed. He was not so immersed, however, but that he took notice of the arrival of our two friends, and springing off his stool, and coming at once to the door of this marvellous office, said, without a moment's preparation:

“It is not here.”

“What is not here?” inquired Mr. Fudge, whose

breath was taken away with surprise at finding a man engaged in book-keeping in this lonely spot.

"It is next door," said the accountant.

"What is next door?" inquired Mr. Fudge.

"*That*," answered the accountant, first tapping the mahogany box containing the pistol and ammunition, which Mr. Pinchbold held in his hand, and then laying his finger on his nose. "The shooting-gallery is next door."

"Thank you," said Mr. Fudge, politely; "we are most distressed to have disturbed you."

"I am used to it," said the accountant.

"We have disturbed you at your accounts."

"I am used to it."

"You see," continued Mr. Fudge, "the gate of your—" he hesitated whether to say garden or place of business, "the gate was open."

"It is always open," said the accountant.

By this time, as they had been walking towards the entrance of the garden, they had arrived at the "gate that was always open."

The accountant again laid the forefinger of his right hand on his nose, and with the same finger of his left hand pointed down the lane to a little wicket-gate a few paces off.

"It is there," said the accountant.

Mr. Fudge and his companion expressed their gratitude and their regrets once more, and the accountant watched them as they went up to the wicket-gate.

It was locked, and after ringing a cracked bell two or three times and getting no answer, the two Englishmen looked round to the place where they had

left the accountant. He was not to be seen, but at this moment there burst forth, apparently from the garden they had just left, a long, discordant blast, emanating from some brazen instrument, and awakening the echoes far and near.

"Let us go," said Mr. Pinchbold; "this is very horrible."

It was. An accountant keeping books in a solitary summer-house, in a deserted garden, continually in the habit of directing strangers to a shooting-gallery, which was shut up, and then retiring to his solitude and refreshing himself with a series of discordant blasts through a French horn—this was surely altogether a state of things which no one could be expected to regard as wholly satisfactory.

By the time that our two friends had walked out of ear-shot of the sounds uttered by the musical accountant, which was not soon done, the hour had arrived when it was necessary to think of starting for the fête, which, it will be remembered, our travellers had determined to attend. So, a snack in the shape of a "bifteck aux pommes" having been disposed of, and Mazard having been tied up in the stable and left in intimate conversation with Blinkers, the two friends set off at about four o'clock in the afternoon.

CHAPTER V.

The Reader hears how Mr. Fudge and Mr. Pinchbold went to the Fête at Sens; also how both Gentlemen (but Mr. Pinchbold especially) enjoyed themselves on the Occasion.

THE fête, a portion of whose programme was given in the last chapter but one, was to take place not in the town of Sens itself, but in a small village at a little distance from it. Our two Englishmen started with rather vague ideas as to where this village lay, but they trusted to the chance of finding other persons bound in the same direction, whom it would be possible for them to follow; and, indeed, having once got out of the town, they had little difficulty in ascertaining what course they were to take, there being not only a tolerable show of pedestrians all moving in one direction, but also a procession of covered carts going the same way, and filled with young boys and girls, in such a condition of animal spirits as indicated that there was some fun in prospect.

Let no one suppose that these pleasure-seekers, however, presented the appearance generally of persons about to amuse themselves. Still less, let any one imagine that they were rendered interesting by any picturesqueness of costume. It is rapidly becom-

ing established as a certain thing that the lower classes throughout the world have agreed—as far as the men are concerned at any rate—on the adoption of a universal costume to be worn as often as the exigencies of their professional life shall permit. A black frock-coat, a black waistcoat, black trousers, and a black hat of the chimney-pot make, being the vestments which they have decided upon as the most beautiful and agreeable that the mind of man can devise. Go where one will, this horrid combination of garments meets one's eye, whenever the occasion is a holiday one, and will admit of the removal of the everyday working attire.

The style of dress we have described seemed hugely popular among that portion of the workpeople of Sens which had determined to make holiday on this particular afternoon and repair to the fête. Nor was it confined to the grown men—little atoms of boys, ten or twelve years old, were dressed tightly up in this manner, and with their curly-brimmed hats and white neckcloths, looked like miniature editions of dissenting clergymen who were on their way to the fête, with a view of improving the occasion.

True to their plan of following the rest, Mr. Fudge and his friend turned off when they had got a little way out of the town, into a by-way that led across some fields, and coming presently to a canal they turned up, and proceeding some way along its banks were greeted at length by certain braying sounds which seemed to indicate that they were near the scene of action; a cracked horn being always, from time immemorial, a thing connected with, and inseparable

from, anything in the shape of a festival—native or foreign.

The fête did not seem to promise much at first sight. There were two or three little dwarfish houses with what we in this country call tea-gardens at the back of them, in which flagstaffs had been erected for the occasion, for the display of the simple banner of France. Round these little tea-gardens, each of which had a sort of small bowling-green in the middle of it, were small wintry-looking arbours, in which groups of festive ones were seated partaking of what is the inevitable dish on these occasions, a great sheet of hard pie-crust thinly spread with a preserve of prunes, a composition which was washed down with draughts of a liquid called "grogs de vin," a mixture of wine, water, lemon-peel and sugar, served to each little group in a white washing-basin, from which they ladled it out as best they might.

To sit in these small arbours, to pass from one of these inclosures or tea-gardens to another, to cross and recross the bridge over the canal, appeared, as far as our two friends could make out, to be the principal if not the only amusements indulged in by the frequenters of this fête. The last of these proceedings seemed more especially popular. In due time it was rumoured that there was a boat upon the river rowed by four amateurs. The excitement upon this became frantic, and one gentleman actually cut several capers as he ran off to see the sight, exclaiming to those about him, "Il faut s'amuser." After the boat had passed, a gentleman on horseback obligingly rode on to the bridge, made his horse, by means of a pair of spurs and a tight curb, perform various ungainly antics, and

rode off again, after creating an immense sensation. Then there was a quarrel. Two men having managed to get drunk upon the "groggs de vin," fell into a clamorous dispute on some question of property, tumbled down a flight of steps, were addressed by a pacificator, who informed them that the "moment was inopportune" for business, were convinced, shed tears, and embraced to the delight of all beholders. After this there was a lull, and Messrs. Fudge and Pinchbold observing that a considerable portion of the public was taking a walk in one particular direction, turned their footsteps that way also, intending to return by-and-by and see how the fête got on by candlelight, and how far the word of promise was kept in the matter of "whirlwinds" and "pots of stars," by the authorities connected with the firework department.

Our two friends walked for some distance along a pretty green lane, rather surprised to find that they were surrounded by so large a company of persons as appeared to be going in the same direction. By-and-by, to their still greater surprise, a dim sound of trumpeting, and even of occasional drumming, broke upon their ears, coming from a direction exactly opposite to that which they had just left. Presently, high up among some distant trees, appeared a flag, waving in the evening breeze, and presently another, and another.

Suspicion began now to dawn upon Mr. Fudge and his friend that they had been the victims of a delusion in imagining that the scene they had just left was the locality of the fête, and that they were only now drawing near the regions of enchantment and delight, of which the programme had spoken.

The suspicions of our two Englishmen were not

long in being confirmed. A few more steps brought them to a small trellised gateway, ornamented, as the evening was now closing in, with six coloured lamps, and with the modest title of "The Garden of Bliss" inscribed above it. The crowd about this spot, and farther on, where there was a booth containing a merry-go-round, and one or two shows, was quite a large one; and, further yet, where a larger trellised gateway than that conducting to the Garden of Bliss, shone resplendent with a round dozen of lamps, and proclaimed itself the "Elysium!" the crowd was at its acme, and the excitement at its highest.

It was towards this point that our two friends bent their steps by degrees. It is true that they paused for a time to wonder—as Englishmen always must—at the extraordinary popularity of that most wonderful amusement which consists in sitting on the back of a child's wooden horse, about two feet from stem to stern, and revolving round a small tent to the sound of a dismal barrel-organ. Ferocious-looking giants with beards engage in this performance with the most unmoved gravity and solemnness, and stickling as much for every minute of the time allotted to them for their sous, as the smallest boy engaged in this exalted amusement. Mothers of families, babies in arms, veteran soldiers, and lovers, are all to be found going slowly round on these wooden horses. There is nothing in the whole machinery of pleasure provided at these fêtes, or even at the fairs, which lasts longer, which draws so certainly as the "round-about," or, as it is ambitiously styled, the "manège;" and so little does this diversion pall upon the mind, or lose of its zest, through frequent enjoyment, that when the manège is

located for some weeks at one place, the same public may be relied on, night after night, to return to the charge, and revolve every evening to the same tunes as long as they have the chance.

Different people have doubtless different ideas on the subject of Elysium; but certainly the views of those who had conferred this title on the garden into which Mr. Fudge and his friend now entered, must have been of a pre-eminently remarkable kind. A dreary wilderness, with neglected walks, and arbours out of repair, it looked more an Elysium for toads than any other portion of the community, and was, indeed, largely frequented by those animals. There is but one thing that can render a neglected place at all tolerable, and that is size: but when a place is very small, and as untidy as if it had the proportions of the Great Desert; when the woodwork of every little summer-house hangs in broken fragments; when the paths that lead from one tangled mass of rank verdure to another are neither of gravel nor of turf, but of black and sodden earth, with those little curly lumps upon its surface which are usually attributed to the machinations of the worm tribe, and which are in themselves calculated to dash the highest spirits; when all these things are found together, the result is pretty sure to be of the ghastliest description.

In a sort of enclosure which occupied the very centre of this dreary thicket, an open space between the rows of trees was set apart for dancing; and as the plot of ground was tolerably large, and lighted by two moderator lamps suspended from the trees, and further by the four tallow candles which illuminated the orchestra, the effect, it may be imagined, was gay al-

most to a fault. The music outside the Elysium, too, combining with that within it, made it no easy matter for the dancers to regulate their steps; which was, perhaps, the reason why every figure of the quadrilles had to be done over twice, in order to get it right; and may have been also the reason why Mr. Pinchbold, suddenly, to all appearance, taking leave of his senses, announced his fixed intention of performing a polka.

Our scene being laid in France, it is almost unnecessary to say that there was no great wealth of beauty among the young ladies who were assisting at the fête. There was, however, one girl, in the costume of a peasant, with a very pretty white cap, who might have been considered, perhaps, to have some pretensions to good looks; at all events, she had more claim in this way than any of the companions by whom she was surrounded, and carried her head rather high in consequence. It was upon this young person that the designing Pinchbold had resolved to exercise his fascination; and it was while she was standing, at the conclusion of a dance, that he now, having communicated his intention to Mr. Fudge, advanced towards her with something of the air with which the wicked Counts in melodramas make similarly insidious approaches to the village maidens.

The village maiden would, however, in this case, have nothing to say to the wicked Count; and Mr. Pinchbold had not only the intense discomfiture of being refused as a partner, but also the additional mortification of finding this refusal accompanied by a prolonged attack of giggling on the part of the young lady to whom he had made his advances.

There is much more similarity both in places and

personages all over the civilized world than people imagine. This fête was really very little different from an affair of the same kind held at the Rye House, or at Hornsey Wood; the Elysium was very like a tea-garden; and the giggling refusal of this young lady was very much like the giggling refusal which Mr. Pinchbold would probably have met with had he made similar advances to a person similarly situated in his own country.

The maiden whose discourteous reception of Mr. Pinchbold's proposal has just been recorded, was standing, at the moment of that gentleman's approach, among a group of companions; and Mr. Pinchbold's despair at the refusal he had been subjected to was much augmented by the unrestrained hilarity with which his rejection was observed by this rather large audience. It has been remarked by the sage Spaniard who compiled the history of *Don Quixote*, that "when one door is shut another is opened;" and a striking instance of the truth of this proverb occurred now in the case of Mr. Pinchbold. Among the village maidens who, it has been stated, were standing round the object of our Englishman's suit, was one young personage who at once took upon her to repair the deep injury done by her friend to the amiable Mr. Pinchbold.

"What," she said, "you wont dance with the little Englishman?—then *I* will."

Mr. Pinchbold looked hastily round on hearing these words, and found that they came from the lips of one of the very largest young women it had ever been his luck to meet with. She stood at least five inches taller than himself, and was something more than proportionately stout. In fact, in a country where

the conscription exists in such force as in France, it did some credit to the gallantry of the military authorities that "La Petite," as she was ironically styled among her comrades, had never been drawn for a grenadier. It must be mentioned that the countenance of La Petite beamed with amiability and good-humour.

"I will dance with him," said La Petite.

Mr. Pinchbold was one of the most innately polite beings that ever existed. His admiration and respect for that weaker portion of the creation which La Petite so ably represented were deep and unfeigned. So he pulled off his cap, made a low bow, and yielding himself up at once to the happy destiny which awaited him, led off his fair partner, amidst a perfect hurricane of laughter on the part of the young lady's companions.

If our excellent and susceptible friend had been anxious for an opportunity of indulging in the amusement of dancing, he was certainly now enabled to enjoy that diversion to his heart's content, and perhaps even a trifle or so more. The muscular resources of La Petite did not belie what her appearance suggested, and, as the floor of the Elysium consisted of nothing more slippery than damp earth, and as the dance for which Mr. Pinchbold had been so fortunate as to secure a partner was a polka, the exertion which that gentleman went through in his effort to keep pace with his interesting companion, was something more than he had bargained for. The worst of it was, too, that our unhappy friend, who had lost his wind at an early stage in the proceedings, could never get a chance of recovering that valuable commodity, but was

hurried round and round the enclosure which was reserved for the dancers, till the trees which hemmed it in appeared, to his bewildered eyesight, to be dancing more madly than himself, and the two moderator lamps, and the four tallow candles, revolved and pirouetted about, as if in anticipation of the "whirlwinds and pots of stars," which were promised at the conclusion of the evening's entertainment.

With the lights, then, and the trees all dancing before his eyes, with his respiration so completely gone, that he could not even make an attempt to catch it again, with perspiration streaming from every pore, with a palpitating heart, and with a sensation as if his lower extremities must shortly burst, Mr. Pinchbold was still dragged round and round that horrid enclosure, which he now devoutly wished he had never entered. As for any moments of cessation or rest, the thing was out of the question. If he considerately remarked that he was sure his partner must want to leave off and repose herself, he was at once informed, in the most unmistakeable manner, that La Petite was not in the least tired; while, whenever he attempted to abandon the now detested exercise in which he was engaged, even for a moment, he was asked in the most innocent manner in the world "why he did not go on?"

At length when things had reached such a climax of despair that our distressed Englishman was thinking, with such fragments of his mind as still hung together, whether it would be possible for him to tumble down and so get out of his partner's clutches, or whether she had him by too firm a grip for that means of escape to be possible—at this moment, we say, the

dance was brought to an unexpected termination by no less serious an interruption than the sudden disappearance of the chief of the four musicians who formed the orchestra, a phenomenon which was entirely attributable to the extreme vivacity with which this gentleman "conducted;" the violence of his gesticulations, and the corpulence of his person, proving too much for the somewhat frail scaffolding on which the chair of the chef-d'orchestre was perched. Never was any one, of so humane a temper as Mr. Pinchbold, so glad of a disaster seriously affecting the safety of a fellow-creature—for the chef had received a severe contusion of the elbow—never was any similarly amiable individual so glad of such a mischance as was our exhausted and bewildered friend.

If Mr. Pinchbold had formed any idea in his own mind that the conclusion of the dance in which he had just been engaged would be the signal for the expiration of the lease—if we may so speak—which bound him to his partner, he was singularly and utterly mistaken. It was evident, that in the eyes of La Petite to be once a partner was to be always a partner, and that she was no friend to that inconstancy which is, alas, too common in polite circles, and which distributes a gentleman's attentions among a score of young ladies in the course of as many dances. La Petite kept a firm hold on Mr. Pinchbold's arm, and walked him round and round the enclosure in burning anticipation of that happy moment when the band should once more strike up and give the signal for the commencement of a quadrille.

"At any rate," thought Mr. Pinchbold, "it is a quadrille, and so I shall not have to exert myself."

The orchestra struck up at this moment—and a very queer orchestra it was. The chief, either really injured in that sensitive part of the human anatomy, the elbow, or pretending to be so, in indignant protest against the carelessness which had caused so frail a scaffold to be erected for so important an artist, declined to have anything more to do with the affair, and left the musical arrangement in the hands of his subordinates, and as these were only three in number, and consisted of a violoncello who only knew the bass parts, a trombone who only came in at rare intervals, and a triangle, the effect, it may be imagined, was somewhat peculiar, to say the least of it.

Mr. Pinchbold had, however, little leisure for paying attention to such small matters as these. He soon found that he had reckoned without his host in thinking that he was going to enjoy a period of repose during the performance of the dance in which he was now engaged. He was not long in ascertaining that the notion of a quadrille in provincial France is somewhat different from that entertained of the same dance among the frequenters of our London drawing-rooms. To walk more languidly than usual, with a countenance expressive of exceeding weariness, and with the eyebrows slightly raised, is the idea which is received into most minds of the proper mode of going through the manœuvres of a quadrille. But such was not the conception of the part among the company met together in the Elysium of Sens, and so Mr. Pinchbold soon found to his cost. The very first movements of those engaged in the quadrille in which Mr. Pinchbold and his partner were performing were, to our Englishman, matter of intense and bewildering

astonishment. Not only did he find himself at fault in not being able to compete with the extraordinary feats of agility of which he was the witness, but even the figures of which the dance was composed appeared to him to be altogether altered from anything to which he was accustomed. Whether this impression arose from the mysterious manner in which the other members of the quadrille continued to twist and twirl themselves about in the performance of their parts, or from the diseased state of our gentleman's brain, produced by his recent sufferings in the polka, he was himself unable to decide, but certain it is that he was utterly and entirely at fault, and was occasionally so completely paralyzed as to draw down upon himself some tolerably sharp reproofs from his partner, and from others in whose way he was unfortunate enough to get.

The fact is, that Mr. Pinchbold was, unluckily, in the very quadrille of all others where he was most out of place. All the other members of it seemed to be on intimate terms with each other, and all had made of dancing in general, and of quadrille dancing in particular, something more than a study. As ill-luck would arrange it, too, the couple exactly opposite to Mr. Pinchbold and La Petite, were the most exact and punctilious performers of every step, and every obsolete rite and ceremony connected with quadrille practice, in the garden. They were neither of them what can be called country people, the young man being evidently some small clerk or shopman in the town, and his partner also from the town, and a cockney-looking wench enough into the bargain. It was the force of that young man's capers, the intricacy

of his "cutting," the humming-top prolongation of his pirouettes, that daunted and dismayed our Englishman more than all the rest. There was something about the way in which that young man spun himself—if we may continue the image of the top—through a figure, which might well daunt a more adventurous spirit than Mr. Pinchbold's. Nor was it only in revolution round his own axis that he thus distinguished himself. The leaps and springs into the air accomplished by that young man, the frantic war-dances executed in his place, at moments when there were no demands upon him at all, were quite as remarkable parts of his quadrille dancing, as even the marvellous pirouettes of which mention has already been made.

Now nothing—not even the admiration of his own partner—could exceed the strong feeling of approbation which the performances of this resilient youth excited in the bosom of La Petite. This was evidently her idea of the way to dance a quadrille, and if so, what wonder that an occasional stimulant was applied to our worthy friend in the shape of an inquiry why he did not dance? or (whenever he attempted to do so) what was the reason that he was continually getting into everybody else's way?

Of a speculative turn naturally, and an habitual observer of human nature, Mr. Pinchbold was at no time, and under no circumstances, a satisfactory quadrillist, and there is no occasion on record of his standing up to dance, and not in the course of the quadrille requiring a reminder that he was neglecting to set to corners, or to cross over, or in some other way failing in one of those arduous duties which fall

to the lot of him who has committed himself to go through a quadrille. If this absence of mind was a characteristic of our Englishman even when engaged in what is aggravatingly called the first set—as if there was any second set—at a friend's house, it will readily be imagined that in a scene so remarkable as that in which he now found himself, and with so many strange things soliciting his attention, he was even more lost than usual. So much, indeed, was this the case, that Mr. Pinchbold would sometimes, while engaged in staring at those persons who were figuring in the quadrille behind him, find himself suddenly seized round the throat, and dragged off backwards by his fair partner, who having bounced through such portions of the figure as she could perform alone, and being too much out of breath to speak, would have recourse to this summary mode of recalling her victim to a sense of his duties.

All things considered, it is a grave question whether Mr. Pinchbold in passing from the polka to the quadrille might not be considered to have fallen out of a certain useful cooking utensil into the flames on which it rests when in action. As to repose, he had found none, while to his bodily torments in the first dance were added, in the second, the mental throes of one endeavouring to do his best in a part, and who is looked upon by those with whom he is associated in the light of an utter impostor.

The worst of it all was, however, that even now that the quadrille was at last over, Mr. Pinchbold's partner seemed in nowise disposed to let that gentleman go. It might be that La Petite was doubtful as to the chances of finding a substitute to supply his

place, and was of opinion that an inefficient partner is better than no partner at all; or it might be that this excellent young person was philanthropically disposed towards our Englishman, and was determined to do what she could towards supplying the deficiencies in his education as a dancer. At all events, she clung to him at the conclusion of the quadrille as closely, if not more so, as at the termination of the polka, and holding him tightly above the elbow as a British policeman does a pickpocket, walked him round and round the arena of his torments, with a satisfied and even a triumphant air.

It has, perhaps, happened to some one among the readers of this work to be circumstanced on some special occasion in some degree as was the case with our unfortunate friend. To have become the property of a young lady—generally rather an old one—for a single dance, and to find at its conclusion that the tender creature is not to be got rid of. Under these circumstances you become strangely and almost affectionately solicitous for the young person's comfort. She must be tired, you say, dreadfully tired—you will find her a seat. No, she is not tired, she would rather walk about. Would she not like an ice, you say, conscious that you are not cutting much of a figure walking round and round the room when almost everybody else is sitting down. No, she will not have an ice; or if she does, she partakes of that refreshment with the arm that holds the saucer still affectionately linked in your own. You become desperate; you look round eagerly for her relations, determined to cast her loose among them, come of it what may;

but she has no relatives, and is *chaperoned* by the lady of the house. Finally you become brutal, and abandoning all sense of shame, you determine that you will force her to accept the first vacant seat you come to, but by this time all the seats are engaged, and you then look out for a corner in which you can leave her as if she was an umbrella. The corner is found, it is close to a marble-hearted chimney-piece, emblem of your own cruel nature; you deposit your burden there with a mixture of shame and relief, and muttering something about being engaged for the next dance, you hasten away, and rush out of the house in which you have suffered so much.

Let no one suppose that the excellent Mr. Pinchbold was a person capable of such conduct as this which has just been alluded to. That courteous soul would as soon have thought of picking a man's pocket as of acting with such brutality. His deliverance, therefore, from his present embarrassing position appeared every moment more and more hopeless. La Petite would not hear of sitting down, and though she *would* and did hear of some refreshment in the shape of a "grogs de vin," she partook of this beverage without relaxing her hold on the arm of Mr. Pinchbold, and her vigour and elasticity of step were redoubled after having swallowed it.

The situation was becoming terrific. Mr. Pinchbold was desperate. He looked helplessly around him in search of his friend Mr. Fudge, with a vague idea that it might be within the range of that gentleman's abilities to assist him in his present difficulty. The strains of a valse were just beginning to enunciate themselves through the medium of the impaired

orchestra, when Mr. Pinchbold beheld his friend coming towards him.

Mr. Fudge, while his companion was amusing himself in the manner we have indicated, had taken the opportunity of cutting himself off temporarily from the delights of the Elysium, and had been taking a walk outside in order to obtain a view of the fête in all its developments. He had lost sight of his friend at the moment when he announced his intention of joining the dancers, and concluding that, engaged in such joyous pastimes, Mr. Pinchbold had little need of his companionship, he had wandered forth and had been prowling about among the shows, inspecting the wares of the Cheap Johns, and watching for the hundredth time what was going on in the *manège*. Mr. Fudge had, then, little idea of all that his friend was enduring, and his bewilderment may be imagined when he now at length caught sight of him in the custody of La Petite.

"Good heavens! Pinchbold," exclaimed Mr. Fudge, as his friend got within speaking distance; "why, what in the world have you got hold of there?"

The tone of this remark was not flattering to Mr. Pinchbold's vanity, and though a moment before he had been on the point of appealing to his friend for succour, he was so piqued at Mr. Fudge's way of addressing him that he was lashed into a desperate determination to try and make the best of it.

"What have I got hold of?" Mr. Pinchbold echoed. "I suppose I have got hold of a partner. I told you I was going to dance."

"Dance!" repeated Mr. Fudge, aghast. "Yes, but what an enormous——"

"Oh, yes, I know she's rather tall," replied Mr. Pinchbold; "but I hate a dumpy woman, and she is a magnificent dancer."

The magnificent dancer at this moment interposed, and breaking into this dialogue—which having been carried on in the English language she, of course, could not understand—required to know whether Mr. Pinchbold was aware that the music was playing a valse, and when he was going to begin.

Mr. Pinchbold might have been excused for any uncertainty as to the nature of the tune with which the orchestra was awakening the echoes. He did not, however, attempt this line of defence.

"In one moment," he said; and then turning to Mr. Fudge he continued, in a magnanimous and generous tone, "You don't feel any desire for a dance yourself, do you? I wouldn't mind resigning this valse."

"Oh, don't do that on my account," replied Mr. Fudge, with a fervent self-denial which it was quite beautiful to see.

"No, but *do*," said the other; "let me introduce you."

Mr. Fudge reiterated his rejection of this tempting offer; but Mr. Pinchbold, in the plenitude of his philanthropy, was so extremely pressing, that there is no telling what might have been the end of this amicable contest if La Petite had not suddenly cut it short by dragging her unfortunate partner off, and sweeping him into the vortex of the valse with the resistless fury of a tornado.

Mr. Fudge stood for a short time watching the career of his friend in utter amazement. Those per-

sons who are accustomed to the amusement of dancing will be aware that one of the first requisites for the enjoyment of that pastime is a floor characterized by some degree of smoothness, if not of slipperiness; what would those connoisseurs, who turn up their noses at a carpet, and are divided between the merits of oak boards and stretched holland, what would they say to a substance on which to disport themselves composed of dampish clay, with a tolerable sprinkling of pebbles scattered over its surface? It was on such a "floor" that Mr. Pinchbold was now performing. To say that his sufferings in the previous dances in which he had engaged were surpassed by his present torments, would be to give but an inadequate idea of what he was going through. As our unhappy gentleman plunged, and staggered, and floundered on, it was natural that the first impulse of his friend Mr. Fudge should be to laugh; but as that gentleman continued to look, and observed that his comrade had apparently lost all control over his limbs, and was rapidly becoming black in the face, a profound sympathy was not long in taking the place of that sense of the ludicrousness of his friend's position, which had seized him at the beginning.

At last Mr. Pinchbold could bear it no longer; catching sight, in one detached moment of reason, of his friend, standing by the side of the ring—it must be owned that Mr. Fudge appeared to him to be upside down, to have seventeen eyes and eight noses and a half—catching sight of his friend, Mr. Pinchbold, regardless of consequences, made a mad grasp at him as he passed, and having thus managed to arrest his course, he gasped out these broken words:—

"If—you—don't—take her—away—I shall die!"

"What is the matter?" inquired La Petite; "why don't you go on?"

Mr. Fudge was the most humane of individuals. He saw that the moment had arrived when his friend must be rescued. As for Mr. Pinchbold, he had now thrown off all disguise.

"She—has been—sticking to me," he gasped, "all—the evening. Save me!"

"My friend," observed Mr. Fudge, "is a little tired; will you accept me as a partner in his place?"

La Petite glanced hastily at Mr. Fudge. A new partner, of a stronger built than her recent one, and coming into the arena fresh, was not to be despised. La Petite released the arm of Mr. Pinchbold, and seized that of Mr. Fudge. The following brief dialogue then took place between the two friends:—

"I didn't know you could dance," said Mr. Pinchbold.

"Nor can I," replied Mr. Fudge.

"What are you going to do, then?" inquired Mr. Pinchbold.

"Has she had anything to eat?" asked Mr. Fudge, in turn.

"No."

"Has she any friends here?"

"Yes, a perfect troop."

"That's all right," said Mr. Fudge; "and you may leave it to me. Only keep close by, and bear me out in what I propose."

Mr. Fudge commenced his plan of attack at once. "Suppose," he said, turning to La Petite, as she stood beside him impatient for the start; "suppose, as this

dance will soon be over, we wait for the next, and, in the meantime, partake of a 'croute' of plums and a 'grogs de vin?' "

La Petite hesitated for a moment. She was very fond of dancing, but she had all the attachment of a Frenchwoman to everything in the shape of pastry.

"You will invite any friends you like to share it," remarked the wily Mr. Fudge.

This was conclusive. A "croute," a "grogs de vin," and the opportunity of patronizing the companions who had laughed at her original choice of a partner, all these things combined were too much for her. Besides, there would be plenty of time to dance afterwards. She accepted Mr. Fudge's invitation as cordially as it was offered.

It was by no means a difficult task to persuade the friends of La Petite to join in the proposed meal. The original object of Mr. Pinchbold's suit (towards whom that gentleman now behaved with haughty indifference) formed, of course, one of the party; and so did the gentleman whose performances in quadrille-dancing have been already alluded to in these pages as of so agile a nature.

"Well," remarked Mr. Fudge to his friend, as they moved towards one of the arbours, "we shall let her down gently this way, and get off with flying colours."

"But *how* get off?" asked Mr. Pinchbold; "there will be more dancing afterwards, and La Petite will stick to one of us, depend upon it."

"No, she wont, if you only do as I tell you," replied Mr. Fudge, hurriedly; "take a seat next the outside of the arbour, and when I make a sign to you,

slip quietly away; depend on it, I shall not be long in joining you."

All this time Mr. Fudge was looking about for a box, in which his guests could be accommodated. At last he seemed to be satisfied; and the "crouete" and the basin of "grogs" were ordered to be brought immediately. The arbour selected by Mr. Fudge was a very dark one, and rather dilapidated, the back of the seat being in one place broken quite away, so that it was possible to step through the gap into the path which ran behind the edifice. It was next to this gap, in the very centre of the box, that Mr. Fudge placed himself.

The plan answered to perfection. The company flung themselves with such energy into the consumption of the "crouete" and the "grogs de vin," that successors to the first representatives of these institutions had to be provided in due time. With all these elements of conviviality, the party soon became a very noisy one. Songs, addresses, and altercations became the order of the day; and by the time that Mr. Fudge had ordered a glass of brandy all round, the confusion was so great that that gentleman made a sign to his companion, and having himself slipped out through the gap behind him, and settled his account with the garçon, who was watching this noisy group rather uneasily, the escape of the two friends seemed an accomplished fact.

Unfortunately, however, it happened that just at the bend of the path along which the flight of our two Englishmen was to be conducted, there was a pile of basins, in which previous grogs had been served to other members of the company assembled in the

Elysium, and which basins had been collected in this spot by the waiter ready for removal. Unfortunately, then, we say, it chanced that the unlucky Mr. Pinchbold, encountering these basins in the course of his flight, managed to bring not only the whole of these vessels, but himself also, with a mighty crash to the ground.

The noise caused by this catastrophe, and by the uncontrollable shouts of laughter which burst simultaneously from the two friends, quickly caught the attention of the guests whom our Englishmen had quitted so unceremoniously, and the whole party rushed out of the harbour in pursuit of the fugitives.

The fugitives, however, were too quick for them. Mr. Pinchbold had picked himself up from among the basins in no time, and the two gentlemen, dashing down a perfect labyrinth of paths, hit by chance on the right one—for luck will turn if you only wait long enough—and were out of the Elysium while their pursuers (whose indignation, it must be owned, was much mitigated by the discovery that the bill had been settled) were yet disputing in which direction the “two accursed Englishmen” had gone. As for La Petite, she was calmly consoling herself at table, and as there was still a good allowance of punch left in the second bowl, it is probable that her friends were not long in returning to the harbour and following her example.

CHAPTER VI.

The Travellers get on from Sens to Villeneuve, and from Villeneuve to Joigny.
An Incident takes Place which calls forth an extraordinary Display of Character on the Part of Mr. Pinchbold.

"AND we never saw the fireworks, after all," said Mr. Pinchbold, as he and his fellow-traveller were sitting at breakfast the next morning.

Mr. Fudge comforted his friend under this misfortune by expressing his conviction, grounded on a long experience, that the fireworks which they had not seen were most unquestionably precisely like all other displays of pyrotechny. No doubt he was right. Whether a firework be called a pot of stars, an artichoke, or a Catherine-wheel, seems not to matter much. A fizz, a splutter, a whirl, accompanied by an occasional bang, and the discharge of some meteoric messenger into the air—these are the phenomena with which those sight-seers who frequent such nocturnal exhibitions are gratified all the world over.

It was Sunday, and the travellers and their beast rested through that day at Sens—a bright and lovely day, hot and still as summer. That afternoon the two friends strolled out, and, crossing the river, mounted by degrees the range of hills that lies on

the other side. Ascending these by paths that led among the vineyards, and stopping here and there to rest and bask in the glorious sunshine, it was some time before they reached the highest ground of all, and saw the view in its fullest extent spread out beneath them.

How many things go to make up the full enjoyment of such a scene as that. The winding river might be there, the patches of woodland, placed as if some cunning gardener had designed their position, that they might tell to advantage from these very heights, the long straight road—the same by which our travellers had approached the town—might be there, contrasting so well with the winding river, and forming such a valuable feature as one direct line will furnish in a rich pattern—all these things might be there, and the fine cathedral tower too, that lay at the very feet of our Englishmen as they stood and looked, and yet, for want of the right accessories of light and atmosphere, all might be impaired. Impaired, if there had been no sunlight to make the meadows more green, and the water more bright—impaired, if no soft shadows had lain caressingly over the distant woods—impaired, if that thick white cloud had not cast such a patch of darkness over the cathedral tower, and if the light breeze had been wanting to move the shade away before its beauty grew monotonous.

When the senses convey such scenes as this, and the sounds of insects and of singing birds which accompany them—for though the two friends had mounted so high, they had not got so high as the lark, whose cry is still “Excelsior”—when the eye and

the ear convey these things to the mind within, they refresh it, just as the pure air which plays about those hill-tops does the bodily frame. When Mr. Fudge and his friend descended from the heights late in the afternoon, they brought down with them a feeling of serenity and peace which the tavern uproar of the dinner-table could not disturb, any more than the fumes of the meal itself could nullify the effect of the hill breezes on their outward frames.

Of course Mazard had accompanied the travellers during their afternoon ramble, and had sat up enjoying the view and sniffing the air as only an emancipated cockney could. The recovery of the dog might now be considered complete, and his reconciliation to his new life a thing about which there could be no doubt. From the moment when he had once more gone through his old performance, and had evidently become convinced that he was benefiting his master whenever he bought a cake of him, from that time he became an altered animal, and moped and pined no longer.

Except that Mr. Pinchbold was glad to escape from the presence of the Spectre of the Stables, and that both travellers had had enough, after three dinners in his company, of the appalling gluttony of the hungry man—but for these things it would have been with unqualified regret that Mr. Fudge and his friend regarded their departure from the Hotel de Paris and the good old town of Sens. The soldiers were still beforehand with our travellers, and again that same tune, which had sounded so sadly at Montereau, was heard in the darkness of earliest morning,

getting fainter and fainter as the troops marched on their way.

It was market day on that morning of Monday, the eighth of October, when our two friends once more resumed their journey, and the streets were full of peasants and the goods which they had brought in from the country for sale. Their carts, too, met our travellers incessantly for the first two or three miles of their progress, but after that they met no more, and once again could feel, in all the force which the words convey, that they were out on the "deserted post-roads of France."

They were now well on in their strange journey, and were penetrating into the very heart of France. What would come of it neither of the friends could foresee, but both felt that the chance of their getting to their journey's end with the aid of a single horse's legs was not a very secure one. Still they were getting on; they were in the Department of the Yonne, and that once traversed, the Côte d'Or, the Hill of Gold, the glorious old Burgundy country, lay before them. It would be something if they drove so far as that.

The effect of Black Monday upon the spirits of Blinkers was what might be expected in a horse of so variable a temperament. He was in a state of the direst and profoundest despondency, and in spite of his long rest it was quite a difficult thing to get him along at all. There was, indeed, one method of seducing him into activity which never failed, and this was, to make Mazard run on in front of him. Blinkers would always (such was the profound and extraordinary friendship between the two animals) run after

him at any pace which the other chose to adopt, and would even, when for the sake of the experiment he was allowed, follow him from side to side of the road. The fact is, that Blinkers, as has been said before, required always something or other to stimulate his mind, and keep it in a state of activity; and the monotony of a long road was a terrible trial to him.

That by which this little party of friends (for Blinkers and Mazard must always be included under this title) were now travelling was not characterized by any very remarkable feature, and there was not much to excite the flagging energies of the little horse till the grey towers of the Gate of Villeneuve-sur-Yonne became dimly visible along the road. The moment that Blinkers caught sight of them, though at a considerable distance, he set off at a pace which was almost uncontrollable, and which brought them to this little town even before the appointed hour of noon.

It was a queer little town, singularly complete in itself, and destitute of faubourg and suburb. As you approached the old grey gateway which gave admission to it, you looked straight down its one short street, and saw the gateway at the other end through which you would go out of it again. The bright river Yonne lay close to the town, but low down beneath the high ground on which it was built.

Our travellers had received, before leaving the inn at Sens, directions as to where they were to put up for their midday rest on their arrival at Villeneuve. It was a sort of place between a restaurateur's and an auberge, and not like an inn at all. There was no yard in which to put the carriole, and a little narrow

lane which went down by the side of the house, and sloped pretty steeply towards the river, was indicated as the only place in which they could leave their vehicle. Into this lane they accordingly turned, and the ostler—if a sort of general helper who knew nothing about horses could be called so—came out to help in unharnessing Blinkers.

It has been mentioned that the lane in which this process was to take place, was on the slope of the hill. It was consequently an inconvenient spot enough in which to leave a vehicle of such lively propensities as the carriage. Mr. Fudge had noticed this, and having finished unharnessing his side of the horse, had just retired in search of a large object of some kind to put in front of the wheel, when his attention was suddenly aroused by hearing a tremendous clattering noise, and looking round he perceived that Blinkers, attached to one of the shafts by a single strap, was bolting down the lane with the carriage behind him, and the other shaft dragging on the ground.

The situation was a critical one. The horse not being properly harnessed into the shafts, of course the carriage was left to plunge and bump about as it chose, so that it came crashing down upon him if he relaxed his pace even in the slightest degree, striking him in all sorts of unaccustomed places, while the harness hanging about him, and one of the shafts trailing on the ground, made the horse's panic naturally more uncontrollable every moment. Mr. Fudge of course started in pursuit, though he felt that it was too late for him to do any good; and the man through whose stupidity the accident had happened, hung on

to the shaft to which the horse was attached, and improved matters very much by shouting for help at the top of his voice.

But who was it that at the moment when the accident first occurred—when the first movement of the carriage down the incline frightened the horse into this sudden flight—who was it that ran to his head with the quickness of lightning? who was it that hung there in spite of the great danger of the situation? who was it that kept his hold in spite of the increasing speed, as the impetus became greater with the continued descent? who was it that was dragged at this terrific pace down the hill that seemed to lead to inevitable destruction? and who was it, finally, that, by persistent determination, contrived to bring the horse's head round, and so getting the wheels *across* the descent arrested this fearful race in its worst crisis, and brought Blinkers up panting and snorting, but safe and sound, with his head against a wall? It was Pinchbold! Pinchbold the nervous! Pinchbold the alarmist! Pinchbold who professed himself to be the least courageous of men! Pinchbold, who bought a double-barrelled pistol because a helper in the stables of an inn was not so cleanly shaved as he might have been, and had an ugly way of looking at his master's customers!

Here was a state of things. Here was the most nervous man in the world, as he alleged himself to be, doing what many persons who proclaim themselves excessively courageous, would have thought twice about before attempting. Here was a gentleman who pronounced a horse, in general, to be "an awful animal," and who declared himself convinced that this

particular horse was one which would be intimately mixed up with his doom—here he was grappling with this animal in his most dangerous moments, and finally conquering and subduing him. Surely men have set up in business as heroes on less ground than this, and surely Mr. Fudge was justified in exhibiting some astonishment as well as pleasure at what he saw.

“Are you hurt?” asked Mr. Fudge, hastening up to his friend, with whom he had only been able to come up when all was over. The incompetent ostler pulled off his cap, and made Mr. Pinchbold a low and deferential bow.

Our worthy friend was much too deficient in breath to answer Mr. Fudge’s question. He was leaning up against the wall, where he had been flung at the conclusion of the very rapid act which has just been described.

“I told you,” he gasped at length, “that that animal—was destined—to be our destruction.”

“I am perfectly astounded,” said Mr. Fudge, warmly shaking his friend’s hand; “I thought you were so nervous about horses.”

“So I am,” interrupted Mr. Pinchbold.

“Then how came you to attempt to stop him?” inquired Mr. Fudge.

“I don’t know,” replied his friend; “I think I couldn’t help it.”

“Nonsense,” remonstrated Mr. Fudge; “you did it because you knew it was the right thing to do. I suppose you couldn’t help holding on, too?”

“No; I became entangled in the harness, and couldn’t get away.”

Mr. Fudge laughed at his friend's determination to be thought a slave to his nerves, and felt convinced of what had often suggested itself to him before, that in any moment of real risk, Mr. Pinchbold's nerves might in spite of all he said in disparagement of them, be safely relied on.

It was some time before the hero of this little adventure had sufficiently recovered from his recent exertion to be ready to explore the little town of Villeneuve, but when at length he announced himself as being once again able to breathe, the friends left the restaurateur preparing their midday meal, and marched up the steps of the church, which seemed, in fact, the only thing to see in the place.

There was something to see in the mere beauty of the church itself, and still more in the richness and splendour of the glass which gilded and decorated the light itself before letting it into this lovely place. But there was more to see than this. Was there not, at the moment of our travellers' arrival, a ceremony going on, and that the most unfailing in its power of exciting interest of any to which the Church lends itself? In a word, was not this concourse of villagers, comprising pretty nearly the whole population of Villeneuve, got together to see a wedding?

Undoubtedly it was so, and as it was apparently only just beginning, Mr. Fudge and his friend congratulated themselves on the opportunity of witnessing the whole of the ceremonial, and established themselves in a convenient spot behind the screen of the choir from which to see without being seen.

There was plenty to see. A morose young man, dressed in an evening suit of black, and wearing a

white cravat, was kneeling by the side of a depressed young lady in the costume of a bride; both were resting their weight chiefly on their elbows, which were supported by the altar-rails, and both wore white kid gloves. They would, in short, have resembled a couple of individuals looking over a balcony at the Carnival, only that they did not look sufficiently interested to carry out that idea. Behind this pair were their friends and relatives, the men seated round the stalls of the choir, the women in the centre of that portion of the building, headed by a row of bridesmaids kneeling on a row of chairs, immediately behind which phalanx appeared an unmistakeable bride's mother, who was possessed of a red and fiery countenance, which augured but indifferently for the peace of the future household. Within the altar rails was the officiating priest, a paralytic and snuffy old soul enough, with a yellowish-brown wig; beside him, a chorister boy, holding a handful of rings.

The bridegroom having in a lounging and discursive manner selected one of these rings, and just cocked it on the tip of the bride's finger, having then abandoned all interest in it, and left the lady herself to fit the ring into its place, took a pasteboard box out of his pocket, and receiving all the other rings which the chorister held in his hand, placed them in the box, and that in turn in his pocket again. After this the priest solaced himself with a collection, and then going up to the altar, spent a considerable time in muttering to himself, the bride reading the while in her mass-book, and the bridegroom looking about him, a prey to wandering thoughts. After this the priest, appearing to be in no hurry to return, the bridegroom

endeavoured to engage the bride in light conversation, but was repulsed, the lady declining to answer. Then a child among the guests began to talk with that terrific clearness which is only heard in churches. Then a suisse, or beadle, in a court dress, but wearing trousers, approached the child, holding a *harlequin's wand* in his hand, and menaced the child with same. Then there was another collection by what we should call a pew-opener. This collection the bridegroom endeavoured to get out of, hiding his countenance in his hands, and pretending to be absorbed in meditation; but he was smartly tapped on the elbow by the pew-opener, and made to pay. This over, the priest turned round and waved his hand, and presently the bride and bridegroom passed within the rails and advanced to the altar, upon which the groomsman and the head bridesmaid, who had been watching their opportunity, took a breadth of white calico from the beadle, and, incredible to relate, held it over the heads of the bride and bridegroom, while the priest performed some additional mutterings. These over, all returned to their places, and then there was another collection. This time it seemed to be of a social rather than an ecclesiastical character, and it was performed by the groomsman and head bridesmaid, who moved about the choir to make it, hand-in-hand, and with that peculiar dancing step which is called so aptly "*se dandinant*" in the French language.

Having collected all that was to be had, this pair danced off into the vestry, whither the rest followed them, and all was over. The populace, it must be added, seemed from the first to think it all tremendous fun, and to have an especial delight in seeing

the collections going on, and feeling that they were not called on to contribute—a sensation which is, indeed, one of the sweetest of which humanity is susceptible.

The wedding, the church, and the river were all the lions of Villeneuve, and after a tolerable repast, and a rest in all of three hours and a half for Blinkers, our travellers once more took the road, Mr. Pinchbold being much disturbed in mind by the extraordinary conduct of a stranger who, just as they were on the point of starting, sprang suddenly from some concealed place, and rushing up to Mr. Fudge, placed a pocket-book before him, and pointed to these words—"Freeman and Co., Whetstone-park, Lincoln's Inn."

"Do you know?" inquired the stranger, in something supposed to be the English tongue, and with a hideous grimace.

Mr. Fudge replied that he knew the place, but not the persons indicated.

"Ah! by reputation," exclaimed the stranger, without the slightest reason for saying so, and with that he disappeared as suddenly as he had shown himself, and was never seen again.

All that afternoon the travellers wound their way in slow but delightful progress through a beautiful country, the road lying chiefly on the high ground above the river. The weather was still most favourable, but towards evening the clouds began to gather in the wildest and most terrific forms behind them, the black shapes seeming to pursue them like a vengeance. It was wreaked, however, elsewhere, for but a few

drops fell, and then the sun shone out again in all its splendour.

Beyond the apparition on the road of an Italian musician wheeling his organ in front of him in the direction of Joigny, and concerning whom Mr. Pinchbold conceived the most terrific suspicions, nothing of any sort occurred to mark the journey from Villeneuve. The sun was setting as the travellers descended into the town of Joigny, and took their way along the quays by the river-side in search of the Hotel de la Poste.

By the dim and uncertain light shed from the last glimmer of the day, and the faint rays of the lamp above the inn-door, Mr. Fudge and his friend made out that a sentinel was pacing backwards and forwards before the inn. Still the soldiers, then. Still the same difficulties in getting shelter. Still that strain of music in the darkness of the morning.

There seemed even less hope of accommodation than ever at the Hotel de la Poste. The officers had possession of everything. It was a desultory, ungoverned sort of hotel this, that took care of itself as well as it could. The establishment, according to Mr. Pinchbold's account, consisted of a young girl assisted by two satirical old women, a delightful boy—a sort of scullion, who alone seemed disposed to assist the travellers—and a cook, or chef-de-cuisine, who was, perhaps—*primus inter pares*—at the head of the rest. In the stable was a very meek ostler and a truculent boy, who showed Mr. Fudge a horse of his master's which was in the habit of trotting six miles in five minutes. This boy, as might be expected, was guilty

of the dastardly act of stealing the candle out of Mr. Fudge's stable-lantern.

The deficiency of accommodation was so great at the Hotel de la Poste, that there was no one found who would even promise a room to our two Englishmen. They might, if they liked, have the room which the officers were using as a *salle-à-manger*, when those gentlemen had done with it. A couple of beds should, somehow or other, be made up in that apartment—that was absolutely all the inn could do for them.

Never was such a room as that when our travellers at length got into it. "It was enough to banish sleep for ever, to look around you," says Mr. Pinchbold. "At one end of the room, which was about forty feet long, was a vast side-board, and at the other, a couple of truckle bedsteads, put in for the occasion; between them a landscape hung on the wall, a church tower being one of the features of the scene, and in the church tower, a real clock that went. The other decoration of the walls consisted of a couple of prints from the life of Napoleon. One of them shows him at the siege of Montereau. He is surrounded by a staff of officers, in whose countenances the keenest alarm for their own safety is obviously depicted. And in these circumstances they are encouraged by the Emperor in rather a peculiar manner: 'My friends,' he says, 'go on—the bullet which is to kill me is not yet cast.' A remark this, which seems to afford less consolation to the panic-stricken staff than would have been conveyed by an assurance that the bullets which were to kill *them* had not yet been cast.

"The companion print to this shows us the same illustrious general wounded at Ratisbonne. He is

standing firmly upon the wounded foot, which is being bound up by a surgeon. The Emperor's other foot is in the stirrup, which depends from the saddle of a milk-white charger, who is trotting away from him at the rate of twelve English miles per hour." Mr. Pinchbold concludes this entry by expressing his intense dislike of the idea of sleeping in a room containing a long dining-table, a sideboard, and vinegar cruets. He also appears to be much disturbed by two doors, which open out of the room into a mysterious passage, and which he is unable to secure to his liking.

Well, one can sleep even in a room with a cruet-stand proclaiming it for a dining-room, if one is but sufficiently tired out with travelling. No panacea for sleep like the fatigue and change of a journey.

CHAPTER VII.

An adventurous Chapter, in which Mr. Pinchbold thinks he is poisoned, and towards the Conclusion of which our Travellers are benighted in a strange Country, and lose their Way.

IF we in England were to meet with a commercial traveller, who, being a man of rough and bulky outside, should, on descending from his vehicle, fish up out of its innermost recesses a very little lapdog, and before depositing it carefully on the ground, should kiss it on the forehead—if this phenomenon were presented to our eyes in our native land, how surprised we should be. Yet all this took place in the courtyard of the Hotel de la Poste, just as our travellers were leaving that inn on the morning of Tuesday, the 9th of October. The commercial gentlemen's dog was one of those little, spoiled, shivering animals which no dog of condition will hear of; so directly he was put down, Mazard began barking at him so ferociously, that his master instantly caught him up and replaced him again in the calèche.

At Joigny our travellers turned aside from the main road, which goes by St. Florentin, and set their faces towards Auxerre, to which place they were obliged to go in consequence of their having directed that

their letters, as well as certain remittances of money, should be forwarded to that town. Here, in consequence of this detour, they took leave of the military, who pursued the high road. Mr. Pinchbold was very gloomy on the subject of the divergence from the main road. He affirmed, and with some truth, that a change had come over the aspect of everything since they left Sens, and that an awful wildness was beginning to characterize the towns and villages through which they passed. This truth had indeed struck both our travellers in the course of a walk they had taken the night before about the town of Joigny. As for Auxerre, the mere look of it on the map, "stuck aside in an out-of-the-way corner," as he described it, was enough for Mr. Pinchbold. In short, Mr. Pinchbold, who never lost faith in his presentiments from their not coming true, had a presentiment that he and his friend were now going to their doom in good earnest.

It was not a morning to dissipate unpleasant impressions. The day had begun ill, and though the rain held up for a little while as our Englishmen were driving out of the inn-yard, it soon came on again, and all the landscape, far and near, was enveloped in a haze of descending moisture. Blinkers was in a desperate state of gloom, and Mazard, curled up on the luggage at the back of the carriage, was, according to the sensible plan of the canine species when in difficulties, waiting for better times in the glorious unconsciousness of sleep.

To travel on a chilly autumn day along a very straight road, the prospect on either side veiled with mist, and nothing to look at in front but a dejected

horse, trotting along under protest, with his head down, and every now and then absolutely tripping in the fulness of his despondency; to have the rain beating into the vehicle, not to be excluded perfectly by either apron or curtain, this is not exactly the kind of thing which is most calculated to raise the spirits. What wonder that when after about three hours and a half of this sort of enjoyment, our travellers arrived, wet and despondent, at the most dismal, the tallest, the squarest, the blackest, and most deserted looking inn they had yet encountered, and were shown into a vast apartment without a fire, where they were waited upon by an ill-looking innkeeper, who retired from time to time into an adjoining room, and held muttered conferences with two ruffians who were playing at billiards—what wonder that the sensitive mind of Mr. Pinchbold should suggest to him that they had fallen upon an evil auberge; and what wonder that he should take it into his head, immediately after the conclusion of a slight repast, at which he had partaken of some coffee which Mr. Fudge had declined, that the coffee had been drugged and that he was poisoned.

Of course Mr. Fudge, who had not intended to partake of the coffee, at once seized his cup and drained it of its contents, as soon as his friend had mentioned this terrific suspicion, and as no evil consequences followed upon this intrepid act, Mr. Pinchbold, who was a moment before far advanced in all the symptoms of death by poisoning, began to recover himself. All would now have gone well if it had not happened that Mr. Fudge, falling into one of those reveries to which he was occasionally subject, and

pursuing it to a ridiculous extent, had given vent, as if talking to himself, to the following awful remark:

"Suppose I was suddenly to go mad, and rush into the next room, jump upon the billiard-table, and begin dancing a hornpipe?"

"It *was* drugged!" said Mr. Pinchbold, rising hastily, with horror and consternation depicted upon every feature. "It is telling on your brain, while with me it affects the—the stomach—come along" he continued, seizing his companion's arm, and dragging him towards the door, "let us lose no time, let us leave this place without a moment's delay."

To tell how Mr. Pinchbold from this moment turned all the colours of the rainbow—how he complained of giddiness, of vertigo, of pains in the pit of the stomach, of sickness, of tingling in the extremities—of everything, in short, that he had read of in the newspapers as indicating the presence of poison; to tell how he absolutely spun about the inn-yard, in his efforts to hasten the preparations for the departure of the carriage, and how the innkeeper came out and moodily stared at his goings on; to tell of these things would convey but a feeble picture of the scene as it really took place.

Even when they were once out of the inn, and on the road again, nothing would induce Mr. Pinchbold to alter his opinion as to the danger which he and his friend had passed through. He went through a performance in the carriage which would have done credit to a great actor. He writhed and twisted himself into all sorts of contortions; he went off in short dozes, and starting up out of them, clutched his companion's arm, and staring wildly, inquired if the enemy

was in pursuit? More than this, he was not the least to be persuaded that Mr. Fudge was any better than himself, as he told him in so many words. Nor was it to any purpose that Mr. Fudge protested and vowed that he never felt better in his life; Mr. Pinchbold would not hear of anything of the kind. Whatever Mr. Fudge did, his friend was sure to interpret so as to suit it to his view of the case. If Mr. Fudge leant back in his seat, Mr. Pinchbold would glance sideways at him, and mutter triumphantly, "Ah, drowsy." If he got out to walk up a hill, his friend would say, "I see; you are trying to shake it off—do so—do so, by all means; I hope it will answer." If Mr. Fudge sneezed, it was a convulsion; if he coughed, he was choking; if he yawned, it was the approach of coma.

"You conceal your sufferings better than I do," said Mr. Pinchbold; "but I know what you're going through."

At last Mr. Pinchbold himself fell into a state of coma, or, in other words, into a good sound nap, from which refreshment he awoke about five in the afternoon, when sitting up in his place, and seeing the town of Auxerre within range, he drew at length a very long breath, and pronounced himself better. Nothing, however, then or afterwards, would persuade this imaginative gentleman that he had been the victim of a delusion. All Mr. Fudge's attempts to rally him upon the subject were received very gravely; and that gentleman was obliged at last to allow his friend to rest firm in his opinion, that he had been poisoned; an opinion which, indeed, he retains unimpaired at this moment.

With such an impression on his mind, it will

readily be believed that Mr. Pinchbold entered the town of Auxerre in no very favourable frame of mind for receiving a pleasant impression of the place. Nor after a day of rain and cold was his friend in much better cue. The town looked, in the still falling rain, exceedingly melancholy, and wild enough to have satisfied Mr. Pinchbold's dreariest anticipations.

The Fountain was the name of the inn at which our travellers were to put up; and here, as there were no officers to be provided for, there was at least plenty of room. Having handed over Blinkers to the care of an ostler, with a nose about half-an-inch long, Mr. Fudge and his friend started for the post-office, where they found letters, indeed, but no money. This was a great blow, as both gentlemen wanted to get on, and were quite unable to do so unless a remittance came. There was nothing for it but to trust to the next day's post; and as the hour of the dinner had not yet arrived, to take advantage of a cessation of rain, and see the town.

We find, from Mr. Pinchbold's diary, that two particular trades flourish in an extraordinary manner, and that, in short, the principal characteristics of the town are the pork-butchers' shops, and shops established for the sale of what are theatrically termed "character-wigs." "Heavy father wigs," says Mr. Pinchbold, "notaries' wigs, priests' wigs, with a tonsure at the top complete, débardeur wigs, and white curly wigs, show in the shop windows to an extent which makes one's own native wig to bristle with amazement." Having satisfied themselves that this extraordinary article of commerce is the staple commodity of the trade of Auxerre, the two friends next turned their

steps towards one of the two great churches, whose towers show so conspicuously as one approaches the town.

The beauty of this church was very great; and our travellers sat for a while in its nave, and watched the huge shadows as they gathered over the interior of the building at the decline of day. In one dark corner of the church a couple of nuns were praying, so shrouded in the obscurity that they were hardly visible. Nothing could be more beautiful, nothing more solemn, nothing less sad. The sun, which throughout that stormy day had been altogether concealed, came out now as it was setting, and poured through the west window, blazing in the coloured glass in such wise that, to an uneducated mind, this opening in the dark cathedral might well have looked like one of the gates of heaven. There may be finer churches than this at Auxerre; there may be better glass than is found in its windows; more exalted arches than those which support its roof; but whether it was from some fortunate combination of circumstances, some effect of light, some happy crisis of the day, or some condition of the minds of our two Englishmen fitting them more especially for solemn thoughts, certain it is that the impression left on both their minds by that church at Auxerre, as it showed in the faint light of that October evening, was one of those which a man will treasure in his memory for a whole lifetime, and perhaps bear in mind when it is near its closing hour.

At Auxerre, the commis-voyageurs, or commercial travellers, mustered strong in the *salle-à-manger*; and as Mr. Fudge and his friend took note of their manners

at table, and of their style of conversation, they were both continually reminded of the works of one great author, who is, indeed, incessantly brought before one from the first moment of crossing the Channel. "How like de Balzac!" is the one phrase for ever in one's mouth, as each new phase of French social life becomes developed before one. These commercial travellers, whom our two Englishmen now met at every inn they visited, were all singularly alike, and the same types were continually reproduced among them. There was almost always in a company of half-a-dozen of these gentlemen one who was looked upon as a farceur, or joker, another who played into his hands, or drew him out, a cynical man, and a sentimental man, who was generally very fat.

Curiously enough, the dinners were almost as uniformly the same as the company which partook of them. There was always a peculiar kind of thin soup, with great lumps of bread (not toast) floating about in it, and with its surface adorned with so many oily rings that one might fancy that the bread that was floating about was not bread, but bread-and-butter. This soup, which never varied, was followed by a piece of exhausted bouilli, which would infallibly be replaced by a dish called civet de lièvre, remotely resembling jugged-hare, but characterized by an extraordinary richness and blackness in the gravy, and by a flavour like furniture polish. After the civet would come invariably a plate of haricot beans; and this, in turn, would be succeeded by a very large roast fowl, with watercresses and a salad. Sometimes, too, a dish of fish, of the stalest kind, would be introduced between the hare and the fowl; but the part of France in which

our travellers now found themselves was remote from the sea, and that thought, coupled with a singular looseness of fibre on the part of the fish itself, a vagueness of form rendering it difficult to decide to what particular family the specimen belonged, and a very strong and overwhelming sauce—all these rendered this dish not a popular one with either of our two Englishmen. The sweet dish which, in this inevitable dinner, followed the fowl, was a kind of stiff rice pudding, which was very good, and with which the dinner generally ended; the cheese—a little scrap of horny Gruyère—being part of the dessert, and appearing in company with a dish of grapes, one of peaches, generally unripe, and a peculiar kind of sponge-biscuit, never absent from French desserts.

The inn at Auxerre was, according to Mr. Pinchbold, under the government of a long-nosed, Jewish, lazy, and contemptuous landlady, who from a habit of leaning against a sort of press in the kitchen, and gazing up with a vitreous eye into the lamp which hung from the ceiling, and from other indications, Mr. P. sets down as given to intemperance. The waitress in the *salle-à-manger* is described as horribly akin in appearance to this landlady, but evidently considering herself, and looked upon by the commis-voyageurs, as very fascinating. Mr. Pinchbold speaks of a ruffianly landlord, rarely seen; of an ostler whom neither he nor his friend could understand, and whom Mr. P. regarded with suspicion; and of a sort of maid-of-all-work, who befriended the travellers, and who belonged to a class which is largely represented in France, and whom we will venture to call “the good-natured wenches.”

These "good-natured wenches" are all alike, and delightful it is to think that there are so many persons in the world who are calculated to reconcile one to humanity. They are all stout, all red-cheeked, they all stare, and are in a chronic state of good-humoured astonishment. They are never tired, they go to bed late, they rise early, they do all the work of the house, they will promise you anything, execute their promise if they can, and at any rate they will never complain of any amount of trouble you may give them; but when you think you have completely worn them out, will volunteer all sorts of new prodigies in your service. Blessings on the good-natured wenches of France! Diogenes should have given up his honest man, and brought his lantern to bear on some of these bright specimens of the human race, for doubtless they existed in his time as they do, most happily, in ours.

It was to this class, too, that Mazard, who invariably wound himself around their hearts, was indebted for many indulgences and luxuries which he would otherwise have been without. If Mr. Pinchbold wanted to supply his faithful dog with an extra bone, or a saucerful of milk, it was always to the "good-natured wench" that he applied, and never did he apply in vain.

At Auxerre our travellers indulged in that luxury, the first fire of the season. It was kindled in Mr. Pinchbold's apartment, which he describes as a detestable room, looking like a chamber in a prison, in a madhouse, in a hospital, in a workhouse, the bed and the window furnished with yellow cotton curtains. A chest of drawers with a marble top served for a washing-stand, the window looked upon a dead-wall in the corner of

the stable-yard, and the room was further lighted by an œil-de-bœuf over the door. The walls were destitute of any kind of print or picture.

Mr. Pinchbold's private papers seem to indicate an intense longing on his part and that of his friend to get away from Auxerre, which accounts for the fact that on the next day after their arrival they determined to start for Tonnerre, though they had been kept so long in waiting for letters, and after the arrival of a bank post bill, by the difficulties attending the converting it into money, that it was considerably past ten o'clock before it was possible for them to get away.

It was the 10th of October, the days were short, and a journey of something like nine leagues, or twenty-seven miles, was too much to be got through in the time they had yet before them.

They started, however, and the distance they had to conquer between Auxerre and Chablis, their midday resting-place, was at first considerably beguiled by the charming nature of the country through which they passed. It was one incessant alternation of hill and valley. Sometimes they crept over the vine-covered hills and looked down into lovely little cultivated valleys, sometimes they wound along the valleys and looked up at the hills. But whichever they did, there was little difference in the beauty of the scenes among which their road lay. The peasants, too, were now engaged with the first preparations for the vintage, and so the excessive solitude, which had sometimes given an almost awful character to their day's journey, was broken into, and the way made cheerful as well as infinitely lovely.

Of Chablis itself, the town which gives its name to the wine which, as an accompaniment to a plate of oysters, is inseparable from every perfect dinner: of this little town there is not much to be remarked, except that it is situated in a beautiful country, and that it is much smaller and more wild than from the importance of its wine-trade might have been expected. It is also surprising enough that there is no railroad to this place, though one passes within not more than twelve miles of it. The preparations in the town for the vintage and the wine-pressing were going on with tolerable activity, and the great vats, used only once a year, were being cleaned and got ready for use in all directions. Of course, some Chablis wine formed part of our travellers' midday meal, and both gentlemen agreed that that famous liquor lost nothing by being tasted on the spot.

How many are there among the readers of these pages who have not gone through with some project, which inclination, or rather a sort of passionate obstinacy, has forced them to adhere to, while a monitor, called Reason, within, has secretly protested all the while against its execution? There are probably few persons to whom such an experience as this is unknown. On occasions of this sort, the mind is wondrously fertile in reasons why the course which we wish to adopt is the right one, while at the same time not one of these reasons is able to produce a state of perfect and comfortable conviction.

Now a struggle of this kind was going on in the breasts of our two Englishmen. Reason said, stay for the night at Chablis. Inclination said, push for Tonnerre. Now as far as argument went, unquestionably

Reason had the best of it. The travellers had started late in the day from Auxerre. They had found the journey to Chablis much longer than they had expected, and had, indeed, not reached that place till two o'clock in the afternoon, the time when, considering the length of the journey, they ought to have been leaving it. If they determined to get on, the rest which Blinkers required, of four hours, would have to be shortened to a repose of two, or at most two and a half, and even then, in the middle of October, the darkness would not be long in overtaking them after they had left Chablis, so they would be benighted on a road with which they were unacquainted. Added to all this was the fact that Blinkers had already done fifteen miles of *incessant hill*, and was tired, while something like thirteen miles more, of hilly road also, lay between Chablis and Tonnerre.

There was nothing to be said in favour of pushing on. Even the inn at Chablis was a very fair one, the landlady was a pleasant person, the cook, who had been in the service of a French count, a capital fellow, while a loquacious and amusing ostler completed the staff of the inn servants in a most satisfactory manner. Against all this, what was there to be said on the other side? Nothing, absolutely nothing. The travellers certainly *might* find as good quarters at Tonnerre, or even better, but then the chances were quite equal that they might *not*. In short, there was but one thing to be said. They wanted to get on. They had set their minds on reaching Tonnerre, and could not bear to be baulked. Whenever people have decided on a course which

they feel to be wrong, or, at any rate, doubtful, they are always in a wonderful hurry to take the step about which they have been arguing with themselves, in order that they may be able to silence the voice of reason by saying, "Well, it's done now, at any rate, so it's no use thinking any more about it." Accordingly it happened now that both Mr. Fudge and his friend were quite uneasy and fidgety till they could once more get under way, and feel that "now they *must* get on to Tonnerre."

And here the author of these pages would venture, if he may, to give one word of caution and advice, founded on experience, to any among his readers who may feel inclined to undertake some such a journey as this which is the subject of the present narrative. Above all things, then, I would say, do not attempt too much. Beware of forced marches; and if in any case the performance of a day's journey beyond the average allowance becomes indispensable, fortify your horse with a rest the day before, and start so early in the morning that you can allow a repose of *not less than four hours* in the middle of the day. Give your horse two rests a week, the Sunday always, and, if possible, the Wednesday or Thursday—whichever is most convenient—as well. Be satisfied with twenty miles a day, which, after all, with two days of repose, will give you one hundred miles in the week. By all which rules, if you abide, you may enjoy the most delightful mode of travelling in the world, and reach your journey's end more surely, as well as more safely, than if you attempt to do more than your beast is equal to, and come at last to a "break-down."

I dare say Mr. Fudge could have given the reader

all this good advice as well as he who now writes it down, though he did not in the present case act on it. Both he and Mr. Pinchbold were bent on pushing forward, and so neither of them would acknowledge that Blinkers, when he was brought out of the stable to be put to, looked tired, any more than they would own to the fact that it would be dark in an hour from the time they started, that the road was one incessant chain of hills, and that it was very possible they might lose the way, or that Blinkers might break down and be absolutely unable to get on.

They started, and the river Serain, which runs through Chablis, had hardly been crossed, when the first symptoms of waning daylight began moodily to assert their existence, and the first hill of the chain, of which they had been told in the town, proclaimed itself in every inch of the tightened traces. It was at this time that Mr. Pinchbold, with a grim countenance, suggested that the moment had arrived when, as their journey was to be pursued without the aid of daylight, it would be expedient that the *pistol*, which had been lying idle in its box since the day of its purchase, should be loaded and placed in some convenient spot ready for use.

Surely there never was anything which seemed so beset with difficulties as the execution of this idea appeared to be to him whose brain had just suggested it. The hands of Mr. Fudge being engaged in driving, the task of loading the pistol devolved naturally enough on Mr. Pinchbold, and a difficult operation enough it proved. Between his own nervousness, the want of light, and the shaking and bumping of the carriage, this unfortunate gentleman found so much

difficulty in pouring the powder out of the flask into the measure, and out of the measure into the barrel of the pistol, that he was several times on the point of giving the whole thing up, and was only induced to continue his exertions by his conviction of the extreme danger of the situation in which he and his friend were placed. Then, when this part of the affair was at length accomplished, there were more difficulties to be encountered with the caps—which Mr. Pinchbold contrived to upset more than once—and the bullets, which were such a tight fit that it was as difficult to force them into the pistol-barrel as if they had been members of a Peace Society, and were protesting against being used as engines of warfare. Nor were Mr. Pinchbold's difficulties with the pistol itself by any means the only ones which he had to encounter. He was desperately anxious for secrecy while he was engaged in his bellicose preparations, feeling convinced, as he assured his friend, that if any passer-by were to catch him thus employed, the rumour would go forth that the two Englishmen were travelling with an immense hoard of wealth, or else they would not have recourse to such alarming precautions for their safety. This being so, it would sometimes happen that just as Mr. Pinchbold had nearly accomplished his task, a solitary labourer—as they were still near the town—would meet them on his way to Chablis, at sight of whom our nervous friend would at once abandon his occupation, and conceal his weapon under the apron of the carriage till the man was well out of sight. Nay, once he received a terrific start from a very small donkey which overtook them as they were slowly ascending a

hill, and which, looking round as soon as its head was past the front of the carriage, caught Mr. Pinchbold with the pistol actually in his hand.

Nor even when the murderous weapon was fairly charged were all Mr. Pinchbold's troubles over. The selection of a spot on which to place it, where it would be convenient to the grip, and yet not likely to lodge its contents in the small of the back of one of the two travellers, was the next difficulty. Nor was Mr. Pinchbold at all rendered less uneasy on this last head by the fact that the pistol had no cap upon it, and was only half-cocked, it being a firm conviction of that gentleman's that all firearms, whether loaded or otherwise, had the power of going off at a moment's notice, and dealing death and destruction around them.

And now Mr. Pinchbold has at length constructed a sort of valley between a carpet-bag and a portmanteau, in which the pistol can lie with its mouth towards the back of the carriage; and Mazard, who has been inspecting the whole loading process with great satisfaction, and who, in the extremity of his interest, has several times been jolted off the box on which he has been standing to get a better view—Mazard, we say, comes down from his eminence and jumps out after his master, who has got out with Mr. Fudge to walk up a hill. And now the darkness is coming on with a vengeance, and all the little wooded valleys are becoming shrouded in a black veil, and the hills are grey, and the sky is grey too, in its twilight suit, a greyness which does not last long, but long enough to show Mr. Pinchbold a party of five or six men descending from a neighbouring height, who pass

behind the carriage—furiously barked at by Mazard—and can be seen no more, but concerning whom Mr. Pinchbold is convinced that their intentions are sinister.

Soon the friends get back into the carriage, and being at the top of the hill, try to get on a little; but a descent follows the hill, and it will not do to go fast, for Blinkers is really tired now, and has stumbled more than once. They come to a post on which the kilometres are marked, and find that out of the sixteen and a half kilometres from Chablis to Tonnerre, they have done seven, and that about nine and a half, or about seven miles, still remain.

It is getting quite dark now, and the road is bad and full of loose stones, and there is no moon, and sometimes they come to places where other roads diverge, and where they are obliged to stop while Mr. Fudge gets down, and, taking one of the carriage-lamps out of its place, holds it up to the finger-post in order to read what is inscribed upon it. Sometimes, too, the finger-post has an illegible inscription, and they can make nothing of it, and are obliged to consider which direction they ought to be going in, and Mr. Pinchbold gets into difficulties with the mariner's compass and the map, and it ends in their choosing the road that looks the most frequented, that is to say, as far as they can judge by the traces of wheels upon it and other signs of traffic.

And so they drag wearily along, now getting out to walk, now getting in again in the hope of quickening the pace, but always finding it necessary to abandon this attempt lest some accident should happen through the little horse's tendency to stumble.

It was during one of these spasmodic efforts to advance, and while, there being a little bit of straight road, the unhappy Blinkers had managed to accelerate his movements into a trot, that Mr. Pinchbold, leaning forward with his head out of the carriage, beheld a phantom form of prodigious size, which appeared to him to be following, or rather keeping pace with, the carriage as it passed along.

"What's that?" said Mr. Pinchbold grasping his companion's arm, and speaking in that peculiar accent of quiet, breathless clearness, which seems reserved for the expression of supernatural terror.

Mr. Fudge looked hastily in the direction indicated by his friend, and was for a moment startled himself.

By the side of the road was a very high bank, and on the top of this an irregular sort of hedge of bushes and small stumps of trees; behind this hedge, and moving exactly at the pace at which the carriage itself was running, appeared an erect black mass, bearing some resemblance to a human figure, but of gigantic size. The form ran thus along behind the hedge till it came to a place where the high bank and the hedge abruptly stopped; at this point it suddenly vanished.

The action of Mr. Pinchbold's heart was arrested, and when he attempted, after a long pause, to speak, it was only by guess that Mr. Fudge made out that his accents conveyed a repetition of his former inquiry.

"I really don't know what it was," Mr. Fudge replied. "I never saw anything the least like it before."

"How inexpressibly awful," said Mr. Pinchbold, his

teeth chattering as he spoke. "Even the dog has his hair standing on end;" a phenomenon, by the bye, which was to be accounted for by the fact that Mr. Pinchbold, in the plenitude of his agitation, was stroking this faithful animal the wrong way.

"It was not a human being," continued Mr. Pinchbold, in a panic-stricken voice; "it was too tall; it was not an animal because it was erect."

"I think," interrupted Mr. Fudge, who had been turning the matter over in his mind, "that it must have been a tree."

"A tree!" retorted Mr. Pinchbold, with a mixture of terror and disdain. "Do trees move along by the side of the road? A tree, indeed!"

"My belief," persisted Mr. Fudge, "is, that it was a very black tree, at some considerable distance from the road; and I believe that we passed the near objects so much more quickly than we passed it, that it, as contrasted with them, appeared to accompany us."

"Preposterous!" was all that Mr. Pinchbold could answer. "You are a perfect Sadducee to be able to talk in such a manner."

"Well, shall we go back and examine into it?" inquired Mr. Fudge, making as if he was going to pull up.

"No, on no account," replied Mr. Pinchbold, in a great hurry. "I am quite satisfied that it was an apparition."

"And I am quite satisfied that it was a tree," retorted Mr. Fudge, who, we must own, had only arrived, with some difficulty, at this conclusion himself.

Increased difficulties in getting Blinkers along soon brought the discussion as to the real nature of the

phenomenon by the roadside to a termination; but a fixed conviction of its supernatural origin remained quite firm in Mr. Pinchbold's mind.

Nothing could now exceed the desolateness of the situation. A close fine rain was falling, it was intensely cold, and pitch dark. Not a light was to be seen in any direction; and there was so much wind with the rain, that the lamps, whose glass fitted very badly, were continually blown out.

"What a situation?" said Mr. Pinchbold, as this cheering occurrence took place for the third time. "Rain, wind, darkness, a road we know nothing about, probably a wrong one, a horse dead beat, and phantoms moving about in all directions."

"I don't mind much about the phantoms," replied his friend; "and as to the horse, if he *could* go faster it would be inexpedient to let him, on account of the extreme darkness. Stay—is that—no—yes——"

"A light!" interrupted Mr. Pinchbold; "it must be Tonnerre."

"I am half afraid not," said Mr. Fudge, with some anxiety in his voice; "it glimmers so faintly, and there is only *one*."

The travellers were long in nearing the light, which went through all the phases which lights always do go through under such circumstances, becoming first faint, and then strong, then disappearing altogether, and then suddenly showing again; till at last, after a progress that seemed perfectly endless, our two benighted adventurers got near enough to it to see that it was but one feeble light, indeed, showing in the window of a solitary cottage, standing at some little distance from the side of the road.

This was the hardest thing to bear of all. Both Mr. Fudge and his companion began now to feel almost desperate; their hopes had been raised by this light, though they had scarcely acknowledged to themselves that they were so; and now they were utterly dashed. There were no more lights to be seen now, strain their eyes as they would; an impenetrable black veil was over everything.

It was too evident now that Blinkers was dead beat; the only pace he could attempt, whether the road was up-hill or down-hill (and it was always one or the other) was a very slow walk; and this even at times became impossible, and the little horse would stop outright. At every fresh declivity, too, Mr. Fudge, who was dreadfully afraid that Blinkers would fall, was obliged to get out and put the drag on; and as the road consisted of a chain of small hills and valleys, this interruption to progress occurred about every five minutes.

At last, they arrived at the foot of a hill, which, from the whiteness of the road enabling them to see some way before them, appeared longer than those over which they had hitherto been passing.

"If something doesn't 'turn up' at the top of that hill, I shall begin to lose all hope," said Mr. Fudge.

Mr. Pinchbold did not answer; he had got past the period when words are any relief. Both gentlemen got out to walk up this hill; but even then the ascent was not accomplished without many stoppages. At the top of the hill, when it was at length attained, a road branched off suddenly to the right; and as there was a finger-post at the corner, Mr. Fudge struck a light, and holding his lantern up to the inscription,

read these words:—"Road from Tonnerre to Noyers;" an arrow pointing down this road was placed exactly under the word Tonnerre.

"If we go in the direction indicated by the arrow I suppose we are all right," said Mr. Fudge, after puzzling some time at the inscription. The fact is, he was thoroughly stupefied with hunger and fatigue.

Mr. Pinchbold was not in a state to offer an opinion; but he was heard to mutter indistinctly, that he supposed that, unless somebody murdered them, he and his friend would get to some human habitation the next morning; but that the horse was so utterly knocked up that there was an end of the journey.

"And the toils and hardships of it," said Mr. Pinchbold, at length speaking intelligibly, "are so many that really one could hardly wish it otherwise."

The travellers were now pursuing the new route into which they had turned, and which had, at any rate, the merit of being tolerably flat. There was, however, no light to be seen in any direction, and no signs of any likelihood of their journey coming to a termination.

"I begin to think we have made some mistake," said Mr. Fudge, after they had been dragging thus wearily along for some time. "We are upon high ground; there seems nothing to impede the view; and though it is so dark, we should see a light if there was one within any reasonable distance." And Mr. Fudge pulled up once more, and standing up in his place, strained his eyes into the distance in all directions.

"'Tonnerre à Noyers,' you said, did you not?" asked Mr. Pinchbold, rousing himself by a super-

natural effort, as he saw that his companion stood really in need of assistance.

"That was the inscription," answered Mr. Fudge, helplessly.

"But how do you know that the arrow was not pointing to Noyers?"

"I have just been thinking," replied Mr. Fudge, "whether it might be so. At all events, I'm afraid that it is useless pursuing this route, and that we must retrace our steps to the finger-post."

If the travellers had pursued that road, it is likely enough that some part of Mr. Pinchbold's prophecy might have been verified, for it was indeed the road to Noyers, and that town was at least twenty miles off.

And now the wretched Blinkers had to be turned round, and the road which they had followed for a considerable distance, had all to be traversed once again, at the same walking pace. It seemed as if the finger-post would never be reached. Arrived at this point, the travellers came to the resolution of continuing the road on which they had originally been travelling, and of sticking to it at any rate, come of it what might. It was not long before a considerable descent began to make itself felt, and Mr. Fudge got down again to put on the drag. He was startled from this occupation by a joyous exclamation from Mr. Pinchbold.

"I see a light!" cried that gentleman.

Mr. Fudge looked in the direction pointed out by his friend, and saw the light also. Presently, he advanced a few paces along the road, and looked further down the hill.

"All right," he said; "there are several lights; we

are close to the town at last. Look, Blinkers!" continued Mr. Fudge, absolutely, in the fulness of his benevolence, turning the horse's head in the direction of the lights. "See there, old boy!—we shall soon be there now." And with that he mounted to his place again, and with a crack of the whip and a cheery cry to the little Irishman, started the weary load once more.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER VIII.

Tonnerre, and Rest. Some Account of the goodly Company assembled at the Inn at Ancy le Franc, and of their refreshing and ingenious Conversation; with other Matters.

FLASHING lights, a benevolent landlady, an alacritous boywaiter, a cheerful room with a fire blazing in no time, a basin of soup, a famous beefsteak, with fried potatoes, a bottle of Burgundy, and some hot brandy-and-water, all these things greeted our two half desperate adventurers on their arrival at the Hotel du Lion d'Or, at the town of Tonnerre.

Before attending to any of his own comforts, Mr. Fudge, as the reader will expect, proceeded at once to the stable, that he might see what sort of provision was made there for those of the exhausted Blinkers; Mr. Fudge was, in fact, not a little anxious to see how far this excellent animal was knocked up by the day's journey. The horse's first act on getting into his stall, where a very comfortable bed was made up for him, was to give way to a series of the most terrific yawns. Having relieved himself in this way, he began to look about him, and to thrust his soft nose into the manger, nibbling at such grains and such scraps of clover-tops as happened to be lying perdu in that receptacle. "If

he can eat, he is all right," thought Mr. Fudge to himself, and he gave directions for the administering of half a feed of oats at once.

As soon as the first rattle of the grain was heard in the sieve, Mr. Fudge ceased to be apprehensive on the subject of the little horse, who pricked up his ears, turned his head in the direction from which this appetizing sound came, and gave vent to a kind of snorting neigh, which proved his appetite to be in good condition. Mr. Fudge stayed to see him ram his nose into the oats as soon as they were placed in the manger, and then, quite satisfied with the energy of his attack upon his supper, left him to look after his own.

In spite of the favourable report which Mr. Fudge was able to give of the little horse's appetite, it was decided by the two friends over their evening meal, that he should have a day's rest at Tonnerre, and that on the succeeding day his forces should only be taxed to the extent of a short course to the neighbouring town of Ancy le Franc. It is only justice to both Mr. Fudge and his friend to mention here, that in coming to this decision, they were neither of them influenced by the chance circumstance of their having got into one of the best inns they had yet met with.

That it was so there could be no doubt. The management of the Lion d'Or was, according to our usual authority on these matters, Mr. Pinchbold, in the hands of a sort of commonwealth of old women, all of the most singular amiability, all anxious for the well-being of our travellers, and, what is more remarkable, all on strange terms of politeness and affection with each other, so that amicable contests would arise

between them for the more arduous undertakings in connexion with the house-service, and brooms and slop-pails were almost fought for by these benevolent old ladies, in their longing to save each other trouble. Mr. Pinchbold speaks further of an ostler with a moustache, and a boy with red hair, who sang while he waited at table.

Of his bed-room the same gentleman says, that it "was a room with a welcome in it." A room containing old-fashioned arm-chairs and a sofa covered with red velvet ornamented with gold-coloured stars. His bed was curtained with the same material. A large square table was made use of as a washstand. The walls were decorated with a single print, a lithograph, highly coloured, and representing the interior of a clean blacksmith's shop. "A child," says Mr. P., "is mounted on a stool, hammering at the anvil, while a ferocious, but scrupulously clean blacksmith is demonstrating with both hands, to a maiden with a basket on her arm, who is sulkily turning away from him. Inscribed underneath is the legend, 'à forger on devient forgeron,' or, as it may be literally translated, 'by *blacksmithing* one becomes a blacksmith.'"

In these comfortable quarters—for no doubt Mr. Fudge's room was in all points as satisfactory as his companion's—our two friends passed two nights and a day pleasantly enough. Tonnerre, the town whose very name, as it appeared on the map, had struck Mr. Pinchbold with horror, as suggestive of so wild and terrible a place, turned out to be one of the most cheerful spots which the travellers had yet visited. It was a picturesque, irregularly built old town, with a

church perched up upon a very steep hill in the middle of it, and accessible by flights of broad flat steps. From the terrace heights round about the church, you could see a wide extent of prospect, stretching away over the vine-covered flats to where, in the extreme distance, the boundary of the Côte d'Or marked the entrance to the fair domains of the Burgundy country proper.

The company assembled at table at the Lion d'Or was the most agreeable which our two friends had yet encountered. The conversation was well sustained and full of interest. There was one person who appeared at the dinner who was rendered remarkable solely by his personal appearance. He was a man of perfectly enormous stature, and with the cranium of a colossus. There was a curious resemblance in this gentleman's head to that of Sir Walter Scott, and altogether he was so unlike a Frenchman, and so essentially British in his appearance, that our two Englishmen felt almost as if they were associating with a countryman. With this gentleman, and a certain very pleasant Burgundian who sat next him, Mr. Fudge and his companion had a good deal of conversation; the talk being naturally about the neighbouring country, and the road which the travellers were to take in order to get to Dijon, the capital of the Côte d'Or, and the next important stage in their journey. As far as Montbard, the route by Ancy le Franc was simple enough, but after this point it appeared that there were two roads; one that lay along the valleys by Vitteaux, which had the advantage of being the best road as well as the flattest; the other on the heights by Chanceaux and St. Seine, a toilsome, deserted road,

but passing through some wonderful scenery, and especially through what both the colossal gentleman and the Burgundian pronounced to be a kind of miniature Switzerland—the Val de Suzon. Neither of these gentlemen had much to say about the inns which the travellers were likely to meet with.

“It is a deserted road,” said the tall man; “scarcely any one ever passes there, and you must not expect great things.”

Mr. Pinchbold having gained some further information, by which he learned to his inexpressible horror that the country they were going through was still supplied with a good sprinkling of wolves, foxes, and wild boars, our travellers were now left to mature their plans, and to decide between the respective attractions of the upper and lower route.

At Tonnerre, in rejoining the high road to Dijon, our travellers had once again come up with the military. The officers were, however, located at another hotel, for Tonnerre boasted two inns, and did not this time monopolize, as on other occasions, all the attention and all the beds.

The old sad tune broke upon the ears of Mr. Fudge as he woke on the morning when he and his friend were to leave Tonnerre. The troops were again forming in the dark, and again as they marched away that plaintive air became fainter and more faint, till at last both it and the long tramp of feet that accompanied it died altogether away in the distance.

It was a rainy morning; so, as the shortness of the journey to Ancy le Franc did not render a midday rest necessary, our travellers decided to wait till the afternoon on the chance of the weather clearing up.

The chance was favourable to them, and when at about one o'clock they drove—after quite a tender parting with the commonwealth of old ladies in the inn kitchen—out of the gates of the Lion d'Or, the sun was glittering on the wet roadway, and in the diamond drops which ornamented every leaf and every blade of grass.

The country, rich and cultivated, showed after that refreshing rain but few signs of the approach, or rather the presence, of autumn. It was now the 12th of October. They had left Paris on the 2nd, and on reaching Ancy le Franc would have travelled two hundred kilomètres, or something like one hundred and fifty miles. That Blinkers could work was now obvious. The rest of the previous day had quite counteracted the effects of the long and arduous course from Auxerre; and as this drive from Tonnerre to Ancy was only an affair of about fifteen miles, he might almost be considered to be enjoying two days' rest consecutively. The next day they would make for Montbard, and there rest for the Sunday, and perhaps for the Monday as well.

It was quite early in the afternoon, when from the top of a little hill which our travellers had been ascending leisurely, they came in sight of the little town of Ancy le Franc, and it was only about four o'clock when they drove up to the door of the Hotel de la Poste, which stood at the entrance of the one long street of which this small bourg consisted.

Here the military appeared again in such force that Mr. Fudge and his friend were fain to be satisfied with one room between them, and even to be glad to get that. It was a long room of a dismal and

bare kind, with two beds against the wall, and with no prints, pictures, or other ornaments of any kind. The inn itself was conducted by a gentleman who, officiating as his own *chef de cuisine*, appeared in the regular white costume of a cook, and received our travellers in the kitchen, which was indeed the entrance hall to the inn, and through which the only way of access to the upper rooms lay. He was quite a young man, and had spent all the early part of his life in the Highlands, where he had been head cook to a certain Scotch nobleman. His father had been originally the proprietor of this inn, but at his death the son had been obliged to resign his brilliant career in the household of the Scotch peer, and return to the obscurity of his native town.

The worthy artist pined, however, in secret, as he avowed to Mr. Pinchbold, while he was preparing the dinner, for his old life. "The charming grounds where he could wander unmolested, *the shooting*, of which he was passionately fond, the society understanding and entering into his labours;" all these things he regretted profoundly, and all these things were brought back to his memory by so unusual a circumstance as the arrival of a couple of Englishmen at the obscure little town of Ancy le Franc.

Leaving this worthy gentleman in the agonies of composition, or, in other words, in the very crisis of an omelette, Mr. Fudge and his friend went out for a ramble, and turned into the deserted grounds of the old château which is the chief feature of the town.

"Si omnes ego non," was the independent motto stuck all over the old château, which was an old and square building with four grey turrets, one at each of

its corners, and standing in a neglected, melancholy park, about which our Englishmen wandered till it was time to get back to the inn for dinner.

This was served in a small room, the officers having secured the largest in the inn for their mess. The meal consisted of exactly the same viands as those of which our travellers had partaken the day before at Tonnerre, which, in turn, was in no point different from the dinner at Auxerre which has been already described. The company was made up principally, as usual, of commis-voyageurs. One of these, a young man, sat at the head of the table; another, also a young man, sat next him; a third, a man like the first Napoleon, with his hair combed over his forehead, with a cunning look, and a habit of bursting into unhallowed fits of laughter, came next: and next him was a fourth commercial traveller of a different type, a man aiming at more refinement than the rest, and more ready to talk on general subjects. The remaining seats were filled by Messrs. Fudge and Pinchbold, and by an old and agreeable gentleman, a native of Burgundy, and his son, a full-grown young man of two or three and twenty, but who was treated by his father, and who had got to regard himself, as a very young boy. It was, for the rest, a talkative assembly, but the most talkative member of it was the young man who has been described as sitting next to him at the head of the table. This personage was discoursing to the company generally when our travellers entered the room and took their seats at table.

“Conceive, gentlemen, my sensations. I was going to the shop of la mère Regnard, who has, you know, dealings with our house, when suddenly (it being pitch

dark at the time) the earth seemed to open under my feet, and I fell."

"A fall in candles!" remarked the Napoleonic man, alluding, it must be supposed, to the peculiar branch of commerce represented by the speaker.

"In these small towns," continued the relater of this anecdote, "there is no safety in walking after dark." (Mr. Pinchbold pricked up his ears.) "The entrances to the cellars are left open continually, there are no lights, and down you go."

At this explanation of the exact nature of the dangers of going out after nightfall in an obscure French town, Mr. Pinchbold seemed rather disappointed.

"Where did you fall, sir?" he inquired.

"On my stomach," was the answer. At this the Napoleonic man burst into a perfect tempest of laughter.

"There is nothing to laugh at," began the first speaker again.

"My boy would like some more bread, Louise," said the old Burgundian at this moment to the waiting-maid, who had just entered with a dish.

"Ah, Louise, you would not have laughed if I had been killed!" continued the commis-voyageur.

Louise, a hideous woman of about fifty, took no further notice of this remark than to intimate that she should not have cried.

"How should I have shown you my regard?" the narrator went on, in a bombastic style. "I would have left you my horse."

"What a legacy! Why, it has but three legs and a half."

"Two and a half."

"One and a half."

"An eye and a half."

"Four teeth."

"Each four inches long with age."

"The flaccid lips."

"The long and pendant ears."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, leave my horse alone," broke in the owner of the animal, who had been the subject of these remarks; they had emanated from the Napoleonic man and the young man at the head of the table.

"Ah, monsieur," said the old Burgundian, interposing, "what you say of the state of these small provincial towns is but too true; my boy here had just such a fall as you describe, only the other day."

"He was running after his hoop, doubtless," remarked the Napoleonic man in an undertone to Mr. Pinchbold, who was seated next him.

"Say what you will, gentlemen," continued the original speaker, "my situation was terrible. My respiration was stopped short, my brain confused."

"That I believe, at any rate," remarked the satirist.

"My voice gone."

"No!"

"Yes. My voice gone so that I could not call for assistance. If the Mama Regnard had not come out with a light to go to her cellar, I might have been lying across the entrance to it at this moment. It should be compulsory with the authorities of these small towns to light them."

"With candles," suggested the Napoleonic man,

still aiming at the nature of the other's commercial dealings.

"No, with brown sugar," retorts the talkative gentleman.

"With tallow wicks," replied the other.

Such mutual badinage as this, of which a small specimen is here given, would go on uninterruptedly for perhaps half an hour, by which time the conversation, however, would have touched all sorts of other topics. But the strangest thing, and by this both our travellers were much struck, was the manner in which all these persons steered clear of all political or even public topics of discussion. And this was always so. The name of the Emperor, or of any person high in authority, was never mentioned in the society in which Mr. Fudge and his friend found themselves. The nearest approach to politics which had occurred, indeed, in any conversation to which they had listened, or in which they had been mixed up, was on this very occasion of the dinner at Ancy le Franc, when some recent proceedings of M. de Montalembert were for a moment made the subject of discussion, and the religious opinions of that statesman were brought upon the *tapis* rather lightly.

It was thus that the particular commercial gentleman of whom mention has been made as of a man aiming at a greater degree of intellectual refinement than his compeers, burst out suddenly into a torrent of eloquence, in defence of M. de Montalembert and his opinions.

"Hold, gentlemen," he cried, after sitting silent all through the previous conversation; "hold, you are not to suppose that the ages of Faith are dead. It may

be that you individually, or you, or you, are destitute of reverence for the Church, and that you find a satisfaction in insulting its ministers, and disparaging its ceremonial. But you must not suppose that every one else is equally deficient in faith, or that the Church and its sacred Head can be thus lightly spoken of. Such a spirit as this is much abroad, but still there are, happily, some few left with whom time makes no difference, and for whom the scoffing intellectualities of the multitude are as unreal and untrue as the ages of Faith are true and real."

Strange words these for a bagman to utter, and such as you would be little likely to hear in the commercial-room of an English inn. In fact, these French travellers presented altogether about as strong a contrast to our own English "baggies" as could well be, though doubtless they would be just as sharp hands at a bargain as our own countrymen, and, perhaps, even a little sharper.

This burst of eloquence put quite a stop to any further discussion, and soon after it the party broke up. The talkative "commercial" who had sustained the accident, repairing to his room to compose a letter detailing the particulars of it, which letter the old Burgundian pledged himself to see despatched next morning to the mayor of the town. Messrs. Fudge and Pinchbold saw the letter next morning lying in the kitchen ready for the Mayor's perusal, but whether it ever reached that potentate's eyes, or whether, if it did, any steps were taken in consequence of its reception, are questions which we are unhappily not in a position to answer. As far, however, as the opinion of the writer of this History goes, he does

not mind saying that he has little doubt that the facilities for tumbling into Madame Regnard's cellar are as great at this moment as they ever were, and that the streets of Ancy le Franc are as dark as they were before this important memorial was drawn up.

With the exception of the Napoleonic man, who was up and dressed in a blue blouse and ready to be off, our travellers started next morning before any of the other guests at the table d'hôte were afoot. The whole staff of the inn, including a very cross matron who presided over a waiters belonging to our favourite order of "the good-natured wenches," a sulky ostler, and the great *chef* himself, assembled to see the Englishmen off, the master of the hotel seeming to regard their departure as the withdrawal of the last link that bound him to the glorious memories of his career as *cordon bleu* to the Scotch milord.

A pleasant morning's drive through a pretty country brought our two friends, about midday, to Aisy, where they were to rest. The auberge to which they had been directed was a miserable place, and the room into which they were shown as a *salle-à-manger* was accessible only by a sort of ladder outside the house. Once attained, it turned out to be nothing, after all, but a bedroom. A couple of beds were let into recesses in the wall like berths, and contrasted singularly enough with two long deal tables ranged on trestles down the length of the room, and intended, obviously enough, to serve the purpose of dining-tables.

The garçon, who acted as waiter, ostler, barman, and bed-maker, and who had shown such a total incapacity for one of these branches of utility, that Mr.

Fudge was obliged to unharness Blinkers himself—this youth, after piloting Mr. Fudge and his friend up the ladder, began to apologize for the disorder of the apartment which has just been described by saying that it had only just been evacuated by the military. The officers, he said, with great pride, had been taking their breakfast there, and had eaten up everything in the house.

It was at such times as these, when the inevitable omelette, that refuge for the destitute abroad, was in preparation, that Mr. Pinchbold would be seized with the most deadly yearnings for English cookery, and would be driven desperate by some such visions as haunt the seaman who is suffering from calenture—Mr. Pinchbold's visions, however, being not of green fields and English homesteads, but of smoking and judiciously roasted legs of mutton, and decanters of amber-coloured sherry. The fact is, that the incessant civets de lièvre, and the rich bilious wines of the Burgundy country which they were now drinking, were beginning to tell upon the worthy gentleman's digestive powers, and hence his longings for the mutton and sherry of his native land.

This sojourn at Aisy was certainly not altogether satisfactory. The cold was intense, and the rain so obviously threatening, that it was impossible to stir any distance from the auberge, where the only asylum was a room with two unmade beds in it, and a soldier and a friend with a gun, both in the noisy stage of intoxication, and both drinking coffee mixed with brandy by way of sobering themselves. These two gentlemen took themselves off, however, at last, after rendering Mr. Pinchbold extremely uneasy by a long

whispered conversation, of which he and his friend appeared to be the subjects. They were also kind enough, before leaving the inn-yard, to favour the carriole as it stood there with a prolonged and careful inspection, both outside and in. Indeed, there is every reason to suppose that they would have got into it to facilitate their inspection, if Mazard, who had been left in charge asleep, had not suddenly sprung out from his lair and saluted them with a volley of barks of such a terrific nature, that the soldier and his sporting friend, gun in hand, were glad to beat a speedy retreat, leaving no doubt whatever on the mind of Mr. Pinchbold that they were going to an ambush on the Montbard road, from which they would fire when the carriole passed, and make an end of its occupants with a single discharge of musketry.

The weather was now not long in declaring its intentions, and by the time when it was desirable to start, the rain was descending in torrents. Blinkers, too, was in a singularly bad humour at being taken out of his stable, and just as he was being put into the carriole, and before the harnessing was completed, bolted suddenly off as he had done at Villeneuve, with one of the shafts dragging on the ground. This time Mr. Fudge was at his head, and the ground luckily ascending instead of descending, he was able to bring him up sooner than on the previous occasion, but not till all the breath was out of his body, and one of his arms nearly dragged out of its socket.

Nothing that can be imagined could exceed the gloom of that afternoon's drive. A continuous down-pour of rain, a perfectly straight road, a row of poplars on either side of it, and beyond one of these rows of

poplars a perfectly straight canal, running for miles and miles parallel with the road. At length it bent suddenly to the right, and, crossing the canal, took a different direction.

And now our travellers found themselves with a much worse neighbour than the canal—the road which had before been parallel with this dismal but inoffensive water-course, running now side by side with the railroad, and that at a distance sometimes of a dozen yards, sometimes as many feet only, and sometimes so close that the embankment on which the railway was made formed one side of the carriage-road. As far as Mr. Fudge and his friend could see, the two roads ran thus for a considerable distance.

“What a tremendous state of things,” said Mr. Pinchbold, as he first noticed the proximity of the railway to their route, a circumstance which Blinkers, to judge by his erect ears and raised head, was also making his own observations upon. “If we were to meet a train now,” continued Mr. Pinchbold, “what would become of us?”

The words were scarcely out of his lips, when a low, faint whistle became distinctly audible, and at the same time Mr. Pinchbold thought he could perceive, over the tops of some trees, at a considerable distance, certain small floating masses of white smoke. It was probable a train was coming to meet them. Immediately by the side of the road, and up on the top of that high embankment, the effect would be terrific.

Mr. Fudge lost no time in adopting the only course that seemed left. He instantly pulled up, and putting

the horse's head the other way, proceeded at a gentle pace to retrace his steps. He had hardly done this when a tremendous noise behind, and a shaking sensation, communicated, as it seemed, to both earth and air at once, announced that the train was upon them. It was well they had turned. Even as it was, Blinkers, as soon as he heard the noise behind him, began to bolt forward, and to plunge and swerve in a very unpleasant manner, while directly the train had rushed past, and came within his range of vision, he became still more riotous and difficult to control. The travellers had retraced their steps a considerable distance before Mr. Fudge was able to bring him back to order, and turning round again, to make once more for their destination.

It is a grave question whether such proximity of the railroad to the carriage-road as this should be allowed. The railway must of necessity go under the high-road, and over it, and at times parallel with it, for considerable distances, but ought there not to be some limit to the nearness of the two parallel lines? In France, some of the railways have been allowed to run for miles alongside the post-roads, with nothing but a railing three feet high between them. It is impossible for any one who has not tried it to imagine the effect of meeting an express-train under such circumstances, with half-a-dozen yards only between that tearing mass of noise and fire and speed, and your horse's blinkers. The space of a hundred yards, which is little enough in all conscience, would make all the difference.

Mr. Fudge and his friend were not sorry when, after driving about a couple of miles, they came to a

place where a grove of trees interposed between them and the railroad, and as these two rival highways did not again come in contact between that point and Montbard, they drove into that town without any further inconvenience.

CHAPTER IX.

After did Mr. Pinchold imagine, when he and his friend drove into Montbard, that the two days' residence in that small and savage town was to be characterized by circumstances fraught with danger to his peace of mind. The Hotel de la Poste is not in the town of Montbard. It is a grim and deserted-looking inn, standing in a remote spot, with a great barren tract of ground in front of it, unenclosed, except on two sides by the inn and its stables. On this tract of ground, swarming with the recent rain, a few cinders' cars were standing when our travellers arrived; but the horses were taken out, and there were no signs of life about the place. As soon, however, as they had reached the door, the master of the inn appeared at the top of the flight of steps which gave access to it. He was joined, after he had called several times for him by name, by the ostler, who seemed to have been recently shaving his mustache, and that not with water. The landlady led the way through the kitchen.

CHAPTER IX.

Devoted to a certain Episode in the Life of Mr. Francis Pinchbold. In Fact, in this Chapter the Reader will hear how that Gentleman fell in Love in a very ridiculous Manner, and how he was rudely awakened from a very foolish Dream.

LITTLE did Mr. Pinchbold imagine, when he and his friend drove into Montbard, that his two days' residence in that small and savage town was to be characterized by circumstances fraught with danger to his peace of mind.

The Hotel de la Poste is not in the town of Montbard. It is a grim and deserted-looking inn, standing in a remote spot, with a great barren tract of ground in front of it, unenclosed, except on two sides by the inn and its stables. On this tract of ground, swampy with the recent rain, a few carriers' carts were standing when our travellers arrived, but the horses were taken out, and there were no signs of life about the place. As soon, however, as they had reached the door, the master of the inn appeared at the top of the flight of steps which gave access to it. He was joined, after he had called several times for him by name, by the ostler, who seemed to have been recently allaying his thirst, and that not with water.

The landlord led the way through the kitchen,

where his wife was engaged in preparing the dinner, to the staircase, and ascending it, showed the travellers to their rooms. There appeared, from the choice, to be no one in the inn, the military, who were still on the road, being lodged at the Hotel de l'Ecu, the opposition house of entertainment, the other side of the town. The landlord, who himself showed the two friends into their rooms, was a dry, wizen, depressed-looking man, with a wasted, passionate-looking face, and a dissipated air, and not in dress or person looking the least like an innkeeper. He did not appear more than forty years of age.

When Mr. Pinchbold was left in his room he was a good deal struck by a certain air of refinement, almost of luxury, about it, which was very different from what he and his friend had met with elsewhere in their journey. The bed was covered with a sort of counterpane of lace thrown over everything; there was lace on the bed-curtains. Easy chairs were standing about the room, and there was quite a luxurious walnut-wood and marble lavabo, or washing-stand. The room was at a corner of the house, and two of its walls were pierced with windows; on one of the other walls hung a couple of water-colour drawings, of the same subject—a girl, afflicted with paralysis from her infancy, scattering grain to some circular patches of yellow, which may be supposed to have indicated poultry. Each of these drawings claimed to be the copy, as each seemed, on consideration, curiously enough, to be the worst of the two. There was an immense cupboard in the room; and when Mr. Pinchbold opened it—which of course he was not long in doing—he found there additional confirmation of

what had struck him in noticing the drawings just mentioned, and in observing certain little nick-nacks about the room. It had struck Mr. Pinchbold that a female influence pervaded the place; and when he opened the door of the cupboard, which was, in truth, a long and dark passage used as a kind of lumber-room, and saw a great many dresses, and a steel hoop, hanging there on pegs, he felt convinced that the hypothesis he had formed was a true one.

At the other end of this passage from that by which Mr. Pinchbold had entered it, there was another door, and as Mr. Pinchbold advanced into the closet to scrutinize its contents, this door opened, and our Englishman found himself face to face with a very pretty young French girl.

At sight of Mr. Pinchbold the young lady muttered something about coming for her dresses, and instantly drew back towards the door by which she had entered; while Mr. Pinchbold, whose courtesy and respect for the softer sex was only equalled by his profound devotion, muttered, in his turn, a string of apologies, and fled into his bedroom with all the speed he could command. Mazard, who evidently considered the cupboard as Mr. Pinchbold's, had resented the intrusion of the young lady with a volley of barks; and the closet was yet ringing with these, and Mr. Pinchbold was just emerging from its door, when he encountered Mr. Fudge, who had come to fetch him, that they might go out together and see the town.

"Such a beautiful creature!" said Mr. Pinchbold, speaking under his breath.

"What, in the cupboard?" asked Mr. Fudge.

"Who can she possibly be?" continued Mr. Pinch-

bold, though more as if talking to himself than addressing his companion.

As the two friends passed down the stairs, and through the kitchen, on their way out, Mr. Pinchbold looked eagerly about him in hopes of a reappearance of the vision of the cupboard; but the young lady was nowhere to be seen. Our Englishman fancied, however, that when he looked back at the inn, as they were walking away from it, he saw a female form at one of the windows, and that it vanished at the moment of his turning to look at it. During the walk that ensued, Mr. Pinchbold was rather a silent companion. He and his friend wandered for an hour or two in the drizzling rain about that dismal old town of Montbard, the birthplace of the renowned Buffon. The town is piled up the sides of a steep hill, which you ascend by all sorts of queer steps and steep walks. At the top of all is the church, and by its side, on a sort of platform, from which you get a fine view of the distant country, is a bronze statue of Buffon, of which, as is the case with most statues, there is nothing at all to be said. It is a pity that some form of monument cannot be invented which should rather commemorate the thing for which the man to whom it is raised was celebrated, than attempt to give a likeness of the great personage himself. Some individual of the brute creation would have been a good substitute at this place for the Buffon figure. While in our own town, a sword placed on a pedestal, in a conspicuous position, to the memory of Havelock, or a bronze Act of Parliament to that of the late Sir R. Peel, would save us much misery and some expense. The château of Buffon, in its grounds of ruined and

broken terraces, is a conspicuous and delightful feature of Montbard; the whole is in strict unison with the intense melancholy, and even wildness, which pervades the town. At no place were our travellers more mercilessly stared at; at no place did they meet with more mud; and nowhere a more ill-kept and neglected town.

Every one of the dresses, and the steel petticoat of course, had disappeared out of Mr. Pinchbold's cupboard when that gentleman got back to his room, but in compensation a nosegay of such poor flowers as late October can afford occupied the middle of his table, and completed the decoration of the room. Mr. Pinchbold was keenly grateful for this little attention, and occupied himself in trying to extract some perfume from this small collection of chrysanthemums till it was time to descend to the *salle-à-manger*.

Having inquired his way in the kitchen, Mr. Pinchbold was directed to a door exactly opposite to him. It introduced him into a large and somewhat bare-looking apartment. At the furthest end of it from that by which Mr. Pinchbold entered, a small round table was spread with a cloth, knives and forks, and all the requisites for dinner. A moderator lamp was burning in the middle of the table, which was drawn up close to a blazing wood fire, which the cold and damp of the evening made very acceptable. A female figure was seated by the fire. She was engaged in reading, but rose hastily on Mr. Pinchbold's entering, and placing her book on the chimney-piece, withdrew by another door. Not, however, before our Englishman had recognised in her the young lady of the cupboard.

Mr. Pinchbold went at once to the chimney-piece

and took up the book which the young lady had just deposited there. It was a French novel, and as far as Mr. P. could perceive, one of the most dangerous of its class; one of those which treats of the gay life of the capital, the history of a young man's adventures there; a work in which the existence of any such hampering restraints as conscience or principle is wholly ignored, and in which it is shown lucidly enough what a very jolly life may be led by those who have shaken off these fettering restrictions on their conduct.

When Mr. Fudge entered the *salle-à-manger*, he found Mr. Pinchbold standing with this volume in his hand, holding it as Hamlet does the skull in the grave-scene, and looking up at the ceiling immersed in thought. He was, however, promptly brought down to the affairs of the present by no less important an occurrence than the entry of the young lady who was the subject of his meditation. She came in with a large tureen in her hand, and placing it on the table, announced that the dinner was served.

Her position there was now tolerably certain. She was not a guest staying in the house, but rather part of its establishment, probably the daughter of the landlord. A slight resemblance to that functionary confirmed this impression, which was speedily turned into a certainty when, in the course of dinner, she said that she would ask her mother for some article which one of our Englishmen required.

France is not a land of beauty. Since Mr. Fudge and his friend had entered the country at Calais, till the time of their arrival at Montbard, they had not seen one woman whose looks could for one moment

bear comparison with those of the innkeeper's daughter of Montbard. Indeed, her beauty was such that it might have borne almost any comparison that could be applied to it. The girl was in truth very pretty, and had a singularly graceful carriage and a pleasant manner which gave increased effect to her charms. Mr. Fudge professed himself quite ready to indorse Mr. Pinchbold's opinions on the subject of this young lady's powers of fascination, while, as for Mr. Pinchbold himself, there were positively no limits whatever to his boundless admiration.

"I can scarcely conceive," said Mr. Fudge, as the innkeeper's daughter left the room, after placing on table the last dish of a most excellent dinner, "I can scarcely conceive a more dangerous position than that occupied by this girl. She has evidently been sent by her parents to some school where she has imbibed tastes far above her rank. Such a girl as that comes back to her home finding it utterly distasteful to her, and all the companions among whom she finds herself seem coarse and vulgar. She feels already that she is 'not understood,' despises all those about her, and turns for refuge to the pages of such a book as this romance, which doubtless some commis-voyageur has left here for her edification."

So saying, Mr. Fudge rose from table, and lighting his lantern betook himself to the stable, where it was his custom in the evening to spend some time in watching Blinkers at his meal, and in extracting such information as he could get on the subject of the road from the ostler and any of his friends who might be hanging about looking at the horses.

As for Mr. Pinchbold, he remained where he was,

by the fire, and taking up the novel to which allusion has already been made, he proceeded to dip into it. While thus engaged, who should come into the room but the young lady to whom the book belonged, and this being so, of course nothing could be more natural than for Mr. Pinchbold to apologize for the liberty he had taken in reading the volume without leave. Of course, when Mr. Pinchbold apologized for reading the French novel, the young lady, whose name was Mademoiselle Louise, could not say less than that it was at Mr. Pinchbold's service. After which, Mr. Pinchbold in turn could not say less than that he was very much obliged to her. The ice being thus broken, and the clearing away of the dinner things occupying a considerable time, it was only to be supposed that a brisk conversation should take place between Mr. Pinchbold and the innkeeper's daughter. At all events it was so. Taking the book as a point to depart from, it was not long before the conversation branched off into other channels, and it was not long, also, before our Englishman was possessed of the leading circumstances of this young lady's history, all of which corresponded exactly with what Mr. Fudge had said but a very few minutes before.

Mr. Pinchbold was profoundly interested. When the last crumb had been cleared away, and new logs placed on the fire, so that it became impossible to protract the conversation with Mademoiselle Louise any longer, Mr. Pinchbold felt so distracted at the idea that the interview was at an end, that he was obliged to have recourse to a system of giving orders for things which he did not want, which threatened to be alike ruinous to his purse and his constitution. A glass of

cassis, a plate of sweet biscuits, a cup of black coffee, and a *chasse* of brandy after it, all these things were demanded by this desperate character in his dread of losing sight of Mademoiselle Louise, and it is not improbable that if Mr. Fudge had not returned just as his friend was engaged with the last-mentioned beverage, that gentleman would before long have given an order for an elaborate supper in his anxiety to prolong the conversation in which his soul delighted. Mr. Pinchbold was too full of his subject to keep off it, though it must be owned that he approached it in rather a roundabout way.

"A man might be very happy living in a place like this," said Mr. Pinchbold, standing before the fire, and speaking in the uneasy tone of a man who is not quite convinced of the truth of what he asserts.

"In a place like Montbard?" Mr. Fudge replied, doubtfully.

"Away," continued his friend, "from all the contemptible follies of the world. Why might not a man, convinced that he was buying society too dear, at the expense of all the aggravation, the humiliations, and the sacrifices which it calls for—why might he not retire to a place like this? marry a—a—"

"Marry an innkeeper's daughter?" suggested Mr. Fudge; "you're getting on rather fast."

"I say nothing about an innkeeper's daughter, Fudge. What I *do* say is, that I am sick of society; that I think the great object of its votaries is to make each other uncomfortable; that I see nothing genuine or real about it except the desire of every one of its members to advance his own interests; to be civil—no, not civil, sycophantic—to those by whom such in-

terests can be forwarded, and brutal to all the rest of the world. I see self-assertion and insolence rewarded by deference and esteem, I see money openly adored, I see vice forgiven if it is gilded with success, and virtue put down if it shows in a seedy coat——”

“I see all these things, too,” replied Mr. Fudge, “and have done for years, but still I don’t think it is a good thing for a man to live out of the world. I have tried it as you know more than once, and have never found it answer. A man gets too much absorbed in his own affairs, and in all sorts of trifles, so that at last he gets miserable if there is a rise of two centimes in eggs, or if the wind happens to set the wrong way when he is taking his customary walk.”

The conversation was interrupted at this point by the entrance of the landlord, who came to know whether the travellers wished to be called early on the following morning. As the next day was Sunday he was informed that this would not be necessary. This good gentleman redoubled in civility when he heard that it was the intention of our two Englishmen to spend the following day at his house. It was seldom, he said, that any travellers appeared on that road, but Englishmen scarcely ever. The town, the inns, everything had been spoilt by the railroad. At the great junction towns, such as Dijon, Macon, and Lyons, it was different. Those towns were benefited, but the smaller ones might be made a clean sweep of, and it would not matter much.

Some talk followed, as Mr. Fudge took his brandy-and-water, on the state of the road between Montbard and Dijon. It was corroborative of what the travellers had heard already. The upper road was full of

picturesque beauties, but a bad road, almost precipitously hilly, and somewhat hopeless in the matter of inns. The lower road was better, but, for at least ten miles—as our two friends now learnt for the first time—it ran side by side with the railway, there being no intermediate space at all between the two roads. A piece of intelligence which our two Englishmen, remembering their horse's sentiments on the subject of railway trains, received with rather long faces. Indeed Mr. Pinchbold was understood to hint obscurely at a theory which had entered his head, and the main drift of which tended towards the cutting short of the journey at the point which it had already reached; a prolonged residence in the town which had given birth to the great Buffon, appearing to him likely to be productive of the most beneficial results both to his fellow-traveller and himself. Mr. Fudge, however, did not seem to concur in these sentiments.

Mr. Pinchbold's slumbers on the night of his arrival at Montbard were much disturbed, though whether by reason of the impression made on his too susceptible heart by the charms of Mademoiselle Louise, or in consequence of the cup of black coffee to which he was not accustomed, and which he had imprudently swallowed, it is of course quite impossible for the writer of these words to say. He was astir early next morning, and down in the *salle-à-manger* before his more philosophical friend was out of bed.

If Mademoiselle Louise had appeared lovely the night before, what was she in all the freshness of her morning toilet, with a snowy apron and a little cap of inhuman piquancy perched on her head, and simply tied with a narrow blue ribbon? As she came back-

wards and forwards with the different articles necessary for the breakfast of the two travellers, Mr. Pinchbold thought, and for aught we know may have thought rightly too, that he had never seen so bewitching a creature in his whole life, and his views on the subject of a residence at Montbard became even more strongly developed than they had been on the previous evening.

"She is the most fascinating being I have ever beheld," said Mr. Pinchbold, as he and Mr. Fudge took their places at the breakfast table; "and her mind," he continued, "is, as far as I can see, equal in delicacy and refinement to her charming form."

"What, you have been talking to her, have you?" inquired Mr. Fudge. And with that he proceeded gravely to take his friend to task: pointing out to him all the evil results that accrue to a young and attractive girl from being taken notice of by persons of a higher station than her own. In short, Mr. Fudge read his friend quite a grave lecture, and at every word he said Mr. Pinchbold groaned his acknowledgment.

"But what am I to do?" cried the wretched little gentleman, in a frenzy of distress. "She's so intolerably lovely. Hang me if I don't feel inclined to marry her!"

"Come out, and let us look at the town again," said Mr. Fudge.

It was a wretched day, but the two friends went forth notwithstanding, and wandered for a time about the muddy and bedraggled streets. They went into the church, where the congregation was shut into pews just as in a country church in England, staring at the two intruders, too, just as the worshippers in the

chapel-of-ease at Torpor-cum-Slugs would scrutinize a couple of strangers who might venture among them.

It was a horrid town, but Mr. Pinchbold would by no means admit that it was so. He said that the château of Buffon was so interesting, that its grounds had such a haunted look, and were so mysteriously fascinating, that he really did not know how to tear himself away. He even went so far as to hint that he had observed symptoms of great fatigue in Blinkers on the previous day, and that he thought it would only be humane, at any rate, to give him a rest of two days instead of one.

It is distressing to relate, but truth compels us to do so, that Mr. Pinchbold was in nowise influenced by the good advice of his friend. On the contrary, he seemed to rush more headlong into the jaws of danger than before. Proceeding on the plan of the previous evening, he spent the whole day in giving orders for different articles of consumption. Any person who had taken that day of Mr. Pinchbold's life as a specimen of his manners and customs, would certainly have set him down, so frequent were his calls for drink, as a gentleman on the high way to delirium tremens. It is true that our worthy friend did not consume all the liquor which he called for, and that a great accumulation of bottles and glasses took place with very little diminution of their contents.

By the time that Mr. Pinchbold had given all the orders which his ingenuity was able to suggest, it suddenly entered the head of this artful gentleman that the time had arrived when he might turn the accomplishments of the faithful Mazard to account; and accordingly the pastrycook's shop was sent for, and Made-

moiselle Louise was invited to attend and witness that commercial transaction between Mazard and his master, of which full mention has already been made in these pages.

But Mr. Pinchbold had reckoned in this case without his host, and, to say the truth, without his hostess too; for, to his intense dismay, he found that both these worthy individuals had included themselves, or been included, in the invitation which had been accorded to Mademoiselle Louise, and were full as eager to see all that was to be seen as that young lady herself. However, there was nothing to be done but to put a good face upon it, so Mr. Pinchbold opened his shop and commenced business at once.

It was at the very crisis of the performance that Mr. Fudge, who had been engaged in writing letters, entered the room. It must be owned that at this time the appearance of Mr. Pinchbold savoured rather strongly of the itinerant juggler. The aspect of the "shop" itself, of the dog, and, above all, the extraordinary number of bottles and glasses ranged upon the table—all these things tended in a very marked manner to carry out this idea.

At the moment of Mr. Fudge's entering the *salle-à-manger*, there drove up to the door of the inn a couple of old-fashioned battered cabriolets, each drawn by a wild, half-broken horse, of the kind called "percheron," and almost before the wheels of these vehicles had ceased to revolve, there dismounted three men of such enormous size as really, without exaggeration, to deserve the name of giants. As Mr. Fudge, attracted by the sound of wheels, glanced from the window, it appeared to him that they might rather be said to

ascend than to descend from their vehicles, such towering proportions did they disclose when once out upon the ground.

The arrival of the giants put a period to Mr. Pinchbold's performance. At the first sound of the wheels, the landlady exclaimed "Les Wilquin," and rushed out, followed by her husband, to receive them, at the same time that Mademoiselle Louise, whose countenance had been suffused with blushes at the sound of the remarkable name just mentioned, took flight by another door which led to the garden. Shortly after "Les Wilquin" entered the room, just as Mr. Pinchbold was in the act of shutting up shop.

The party described as "Les Wilquin"—a name obviously of Flemish origin—consisted, as has been said above, of three persons. Two of them—they were brothers—were men of the middle age, about fifty or fifty-five years, though a rough life and much exposure to weather caused them to wear an older appearance. They may have stood about six feet seven inches in their stockings, and though each had a considerable stoop about the shoulders, it was evident that they were men who, independently of their enormous height, rejoiced in great force of bone and muscle. The third "Wilquin" was the nephew of the other two, a young man of about five-and-twenty, and who, though only standing about six feet three or four, was yet so affected by, and imbued with the size of the other two, that, seeing them all together, it was impossible not to class them all in the same category, and look upon him as a giant too. They were all clad in the inevitable blue blouse of the French farmer, and belonged, in fact, to that class, living all together—as

Mr. Fudge learnt on subsequent inquiry—at a small farm in the middle of a lonely marsh, about seven miles distant from Montbard.

“Les Wilquin” were all talking noisily when they entered the *salle-à-manger*, and the effect altogether was so overpowering, that Mr. Pinchbold, who had not seen them dismount, and was unprepared, seemed absolutely to collapse as he gazed upon them. It was evident that they had it in contemplation to spend the whole evening at the inn, as the landlord, who came into the room with them, was heard to make especial allusion to the hour at which dinner would be served.

To say that Mr. Pinchbold stared at “Les Wilquin” with an expression of blank amazement would be to give but a small idea of the utter and bewildered astonishment with which he surveyed the three giants, who in turn seemed disposed to look upon the existence of the excellent Mr. P. as a total mistake and misunderstanding of her business on the part of Nature. The glances interchanged by Mr. Pinchbold and the nephew were especially tinged with distrust of the darkest nature.

It appeared that the present visit of the three giants to the Hotel de la Poste had some business transaction or other for its object; a long conversation, in the course of which some treaty or arrangement, to which some member of the Wilquin family and the landlord were to be parties, ensuing and being noisily but rather unintelligibly discussed over the round table at which they were all seated. As the conversation seemed—like most other French conversations—to be all about “francs,” it was not very interesting to our two Englishmen, and the weather having now cleared a

little, Mr. Pinchbold and his friend took the opportunity of getting into the fresh air, both gentlemen feeling as if the overpowering size of Les Wilquin had absolutely stifled them.

It was at this time that Mr. Pinchbold approached once more, in a wary manner, the question of another day's stay at Montbard. He and his friend were in the stable, where they had been looking at the horses of the giant brothers, a couple of wild and powerful beasts, of the unmanageable French type. Mr. Pinchbold, who, it is distressing to relate, was becoming, under the influence of the tender passion, a perfect Machiavel of cunning, managed to turn even the strength of these horses to his own account.

"Poor Blinkers!" said this wily gentleman; "I wish we could have the services of one of these brutes for a day or two to relieve him."

"He is all right," said Mr. Fudge, as they moved towards the other end of the stable where the little horse was standing.

It happened, fortunately for Mr. Pinchbold's desires, that at the time when they approached him, Blinkers was standing in an attitude of the profoundest and most abject melancholy, with his head hanging down. Occasionally, too, he would slightly stamp upon the ground with his near hind leg, as if in some distress.

"He looks tired," remarked Mr. Pinchbold, as they stood looking at him.

"Not a bit of it," replied his friend. "He is just taking a thorough rest, and to-morrow will be as fresh as a lark."

"I don't like the way he is standing," continued

the wily Pinchbold; "isn't that hind leg a little swelled?"

Mr. Fudge passed his hand carefully down the limb in question.

"Not in the slightest degree," was his answer. "The tendon is well separated, stands out as clear and firm as a bowstring."

Mr. Pinchbold shook his head.

"He looks bad to me," he said. "I believe that another day's rest would be of the most essential service to him."

Mr. Fudge could not see it. "The season was getting on," he said; "it was of the utmost importance, with so large a portion of their journey yet before them, not to lose a single day if they could help it."

To this Mr. Pinchbold replied, "That if the horse knocked up, they would lose a great many more days, and begged his friend to remember Bijou, and the time and money they had lost through her lameness."

Now it is a very sad thing to relate, but it must be told nevertheless (for is not this a chronicle of truth?) that the difference of opinion which arose between Mr. Fudge and Mr. Pinchbold, on this question of the additional day's rest at Montbard, did at last give rise to some words, spoken with something of sharpness; the first since the commencement of their journey, if not the first since the earliest days of their long friendship. Nor must we seek for a moment to disguise the fact that our favourite, Pinchbold, was to blame in this matter. When Mr. Fudge taxed him, as he did at last, with having a concealed motive for wishing to stay at Montbard, and hinted that his desire

to do so was less attributable to a humane interest in Blinkers than to another cause—when Mr. Fudge spoke thus, we are constrained in fairness to acknowledge that he was fully justified in what he said, just as we are compelled to own that Mr. Pinchbold was acting in a most ridiculous manner in falling head over heels in love with the prettiest girl he had seen in the French dominions.

But, as we have said before, the truth must be told, and let us hope that the good points in Mr. Pinchbold's nature, which were neither small nor few, may in some sort atone for this his deplorable weakness and folly. Certain it is that he *was* over head and ears in love, that he did not like to own it, that he put his wish to see more of Mademoiselle Louise upon a solicitude for the little horse's legs, and that when he left Mr. Fudge in the stable of the inn, the temper of the two friends towards each other was of anything but a satisfactory sort. And so, we find here a new instance of a difference created between friends; a want of straightforwardness generated in the character of an estimable gentleman, and all sorts of mischief, unhappiness, and dissension brought about—all through the agency of a woman! Were we writing a Philosophical Treatise—and we could do so, mind you, if we liked—we might moralize upon this subject through half-a-dozen pages.

Poor Mr. Pinchbold! a dire retribution was in store for him. On leaving the stables he entered the house, and made straight for the *salle-à-manger*. As he passed through the kitchen he saw Mademoiselle Louise's mamma busy with the dinner, but the young lady herself was not there, nor was there any sign of the

giant brothers. Mr. Pinchbold passed on to the door of the *salle-à-manger*. The door was ajar, and he pushed it open.

Malheur, malheur! There was Mademoiselle Louise standing by the window at the other end of the room, and there was Wilquin the younger leaning over in the attitude of an acknowledged lover, whispering in her ear, and actually—twice while Mr. Pinchbold stood rooted to the spot—kissing that smooth and blushing cheek.

The pair were so placed with regard to the door by which Mr. Pinchbold entered the room, that they could not see him where he stood. It is probable, therefore, that our unhappy friend might have retired altogether unobserved, to indulge his despair in secret, if Mazard, who was as usual in close companionship with his master, had not trotted very quietly into the room, and come to an anchor suddenly with his legs very wide apart, exactly opposite the window at which the lovers were standing.

The transition from Mazard to Mazard's master was natural and instantaneous, and though Mr. Pinchbold lost no time in retiring, Wilquin the younger had turned round so briskly on seeing the dog, that he caught sight of an Englishman's retreating form, and Mr. Pinchbold heard certain dim mutterings, of which the word "diable" formed a conspicuous part, as he left the room.

Mr. Pinchbold was too deeply sunk in desperation at that moment to mind what was said by Wilquin junior, or by any one else. He had now but one desire, which was to get away from the Hotel de la Poste as quickly as possible. Full of the thought, he

went at once in search of Mr. Fudge, and it is not improbable that if he had met with him at that moment he would have urged strongly the propriety—since it was impossible to leave Montbard before the next morning—of shifting their quarters for the night to the other hotel. Mr. Fudge, however, was not at hand, and so our disconsolate friend was fain to wait till he should see him at dinner. To say truth, he was now dreadfully afraid lest his friend should have taken him at his word, and made any arrangements for stopping over another day in this now hateful town.

At dinner-time new trials awaited our unhappy gentleman. Two tables had been laid for their evening meal, and placed one on each side of the fire. Four covers were laid on the one and two on the other. Of course, this last was intended for our two Englishmen.

They had hardly seated themselves at it when, noisier and larger than ever, the Wilquin family entered the *salle-à-manger*, and took their places, joined in a short time by the landlord, for whom, it appeared, the fourth place was reserved.

And now it was not long in appearing that the business conversation in which the three Wilquins and the landlord had been engaged earlier in the day was, in truth, about no less important a matter than the marriage settlement of Mademoiselle Louise. The francs which had been so much discussed were the francs of which her dower was to be composed; and about these francs every kind of haggling and disputation was still going on.

What a conversation was this for the wretched

Mr. Pinchbold to be compelled to listen to. What an aggravation to see that hateful young giant sitting there, listening as coolly to what was going on as if he had no share in the transaction; and, what was worst of all, to see him waited upon, and tended, and all his wants supplied by Mademoiselle Louise herself, who was as little discomposed by the discussion that was going on as her lover. This young lady, too,—whether acting under the commands of Wilquin the younger, or by her own choice—kept all her attention for the table at which Les Wilquin were seated, and left our two Englishmen to be waited on by the inn servant.

All these things together were too much for Mr. Pinchbold's powers of endurance, and as soon as a reasonable excuse offered he left the table, and abandoning the field to Les Wilquin, retired to his room, where Mr. Fudge found him shortly after, walking up and down in the most disconsolate condition it is possible to imagine. Mr. Pinchbold seized his friend's hand, as he entered the room, and wrung it heartily.

"Fudge," he said, "forgive me. I have acted like a fool and an ass. You must give me a verdict of 'temporary insanity.' When can we leave this place?"

"Whenever you like," answered Mr. Fudge.

"Like!" repeated Mr. Pinchbold; "I should like to go this very moment, but at all events let us get away as early as possible in the morning."

"We will start at any hour you like."

It was soon arranged that the two friends—reconciled now as completely as if no difference had taken place between them—should start before it was light

the next morning; and Mr. Fudge now left his friend to go and give the requisite directions, and see that everything was so far prepared that there would be no hindrance to their getting off in good time.

But there are rumours extant at the Hotel de la Poste that one of the Englishmen did not lie down in his bed that night, and that his footsteps were heard pacing up and down his room till morning. It was the shorter Englishman, they said, of the two—the Englishman who seemed to bear the traces of delicate health, and who, one would have thought, stood more in need of rest than the other.

CHAPTER X.

Something about the Country between Montbard and Dijon; the most deserted of deserted Roads. Something also in Illustration of the Folly of Impatience, a Feeling to which the Reader, it is hoped, never gives way.

CERTAINLY, Mr. Pinchbold was a melancholy object when he joined his friend at the inn door next morning. The first grey tints of dawn were beginning to show themselves, but there was nobody astir in the house except the landlord and the ostler. It was intensely cold; and as Mr. Pinchbold took one last look at the gloomy house, and mounted, shuddering, to his place, it is probable that he had not often felt more utterly and bleakly wretched. In another instant the carriage was in motion, and the Hotel de la Poste and Louise existed no more for Francis Pinchbold.

Mr. Fudge thought it best to leave his friend for a time to himself; and, indeed, he had quite enough to do in keeping the little horse in any sort of order. Something or other, the day's rest, or the atmosphere of the Côte d'Or, or the society of the horses of the detested Wilquins, had so affected the temper of Blinkers that he was almost as difficult to manage as he had been on the day when the travellers left Paris, and was inclined to shy and bolt at everything he saw.

It had been decided, in consequence of the bad reports which had reached our travellers of the state of the upper road, that they would keep along the valley, and take the road to Dijon that passed through Vitteaux, rather than that which went by Chanceaux and the Val de Suzon. When, however, after driving a mile or two out of Montbard, Mr. Fudge found that they were approaching the railroad, and, shortly after, that they were alongside of it, and were likely to be so for many miles, he felt some doubt as to whether, after all, he and his friend had acted wisely in choosing the lower road. From the moment that Blinkers came in sight of the railroad, he seemed to become perfectly frantic; till at last, a donkey happening to lift its head up out of a ditch in which it was feeding, the little horse flung himself so suddenly and so completely round that he almost disappeared from Mr. Fudge's sight, and very narrowly missed upsetting the carriage. It happened luckily that the owner of the feeding ass was standing near, and he went to the horse's head, and so they managed to get him round again; but Blinkers was greatly upset, and it really did appear that to travel under these circumstances by the side of the line, when there *was* another road, would be the height of folly. The only question now was, could they by any means still get into that other road without going back again to Montbard?

A little way on from the spot where this determined shy of Blinkers had taken place there appeared to be a few scattered houses; and making for these, and inquiring at one (the blacksmith's) whether there was any possibility of getting still into the upper road, our travellers learnt that at a distance of only a few

hundred yards they would observe that the road divided, and that if they took the turning which bore away to the left, they would find that it ascended to the hills at once, and that they would have no more to do with the railroad all the way to Dijon.

Mr. Fudge and his friend were not long in determining on this course. Almost immediately on their turning aside out of the lower road the ascent began, and the road seemed at once to improve in beauty. The loneliness of that route was something so extraordinary, that it almost seemed as if, in commencing that ascent, they had left the world for good behind them. Their way lay along the side of a range of hills, and as they wound along for miles and miles, in slow ascent, the valley from which they were gradually rising became more and more disclosed to view. Along that valley ran a small stream which showed at intervals; and here and there were little patches of wood, which looked as if they were inhabited by the wild boars of which they had heard at Tonnerre; while it must be owned that the sides of the hill itself which the travellers were ascending had something of a wolfish look. For miles and miles they ascended thus, still with the hill on their left, and the great solitary valley on their right. At last they seemed to have reached the top of this great wall of earth, and the place was marked by a small cabaret, where such waggoners as might still be on the road could stop to bait their horses—and themselves.

And now the road, for a little while, is comparatively level. They seem at the top of everything, and get on a little faster, breathing the pure air with pleasure. It is not long, however, before they find that

they are, so to speak, crossing over the top of the high ridge which they have been ascending so long, for the valley on the other side of it is presently disclosed to view, and seems a vaster, and more solitary, a more wolfish and wild-boarish vale than the other. Along the top of the high wall that shuts this valley in they now move slowly, for they are ascending still, and the road is very bad; till at last, after some hours of driving, they really do reach the highest ground they have *at present* to do with, and find themselves on a sort of barren moor, and wonder how much longer it will be before they see some sign of Villeneuve, where they are to rest and bait their horse. There seems so little sign of any such place that they begin to despair; and Mr. Fudge seeing some peasants at work in a field at a little distance from the road, gets down, and goes off after them, to inquire whether they are still in the right road.

After a great deal of bawling and cross-questioning in a high key, Mr. Fudge comes back with the information that Villeneuve is but a mile or two further on; and, encouraged with this, they start again, and after several more ascents and descents, come at last to the smallest and most miserable village they have yet stopped at. There is no sign of life or occupancy about any of the miserable hovels that show on each side of the road; but when they reach one at last, with a dead bush stuck up over the door, to intimate that it is an auberge, a wild, half-starved-looking woman comes to the threshold of the door to stare.

This good lady seems by no means overjoyed to see the travellers. If they descended, she said, they must look after the horse themselves, for her garçon

was gone, as was the case with every other member of the male population in the village, to assist in the vintage. She had no meat; there was no butcher. She could make an omelette, certainly; there was milk, too; they could have some *café au lait*.

In the inside of this miserable auberge a couple of aged crones were sitting, crouched like witches, over the embers in the chimney corner; one was aged seventy-three, and the other eighty-five; both wore enormous coal-scuttle bonnets, both had packs to wear on their shoulders, and both gave themselves out as *travellers*, though why they travelled, and in what capacity, it was impossible to extract from them.

Mr. Fudge, assisted by his friend, unharnessed the horse and put him in the stable, and in due time fetched his oats in a sieve, after which it became necessary to see what was to be had in the way of breakfast. There was not much. A horrible jar full of soft yellow grease, called by courtesy salt butter, was produced, and with its aid an omelette was ultimately produced, a quantity of milk, quite of a dark grey colour, from the dirt of the vessel it was boiled in, was set in a basin before the travellers, and they were further provided with two smaller basins out of which to drink this liquid, after it had been duly tintured with some thick black coffee. The landlady cut some slices off an enormous loaf, shaped like a cheese, and having roasted one side of each slice, deposited the loaf itself on a chair, which was drawn up to the table between the two seats occupied by our travellers. The loaf looked like a third guest, and was so large that a couple of kittens who were sporting about made it their head-quarters; alternately lying down upon the

crumb, and tottering along its cut edge, as if on the brink of a precipice.

It was probably a good thing for Mr. Pinchbold, in helping him to shake off the fatal memories of the Beauty of Montbard, that the events of the morning had been such as they were. The misbehaviour of Blinkers at starting, the accident by the railway side, the necessity of deciding suddenly as to the route to be adopted, the great change of scene, and the perfectly new character of the road, all these things were favourable to our susceptible friend, and the amount of waiting on themselves which devolved on our travellers at the cabaret of Villeneuve was equally so. Mr. Pinchbold's attention was constantly engaged, and at last, and just when he was beginning to show signs of flagging, he was again called upon to exert himself by no less a circumstance than an application for medical advice from the landlady of the inn.

This was touching Mr. Pinchbold on a weak point. Like many other persons who enjoy delicate health, and are besides rather hypochondriacal, Mr. Pinchbold flattered himself that he was a bit of a doctor, was constantly in the habit of prescribing for himself, and always vowed that he derived immense benefit from his own advice. Now the poor woman who kept this wretched auberge was, it appeared, an habitual dyspeptic, and well she might be, to judge by the style of living of which our travellers had had a specimen. She had originally applied to Mr. Fudge, with that strong confidence in the universal wisdom of the educated which the uneducated possess, and by him she had been referred to Mr. Pinchbold. Mr. Fudge

knew his friend's weakness, and was not sorry of the opportunity of giving him new matter to think of.

It was a good sight to see Mr. Pinchbold examining the tongue and the pulse of the Veuve Dumay—whose only notion of a cure for the stomach-ache was a cup of water with some sugar in it—it was a good sight to see him drag out his medicine-chest from a place of concealment, and make up little powders, weighed with the utmost precision, in a pair of light brass scales which were the delight of his heart. The true benevolence of the little gentleman's heart came out at a season like this; and when all was done, and provision made for at least a week's powdering and pilling of his patient, when the last directions had been given, and when, after they had absolutely got under way again, the carriage was stopped that Mr. Pinchbold might run back to give some fresh instruction which had not occurred to him before—then, we say, when the honest gentleman came running hastily back, with Mazard at his heels, both out of breath, it might be said that Mr. Pinchbold was almost himself again.

The road during the rest of that day's journey kept still on the high ground, and though they were continually going up and down hill, the ascent was always equal to the descent, and so they maintained, on the whole, a level. At last, late in the afternoon, they came to a longer declivity, with a considerable hill beyond it, and by the time they had laboured to its summit they found themselves, at about half-past five o'clock, at the entrance to Chanceaux.

A small, bare-looking village of a single street.

The inn does not boast a sign, but bears the name of Chopin over the door.

"This looks rather hopeless," said Mr. Fudge.

It does not always do to judge by appearances. Mr. Fudge had hardly uttered these words, when a singularly good-looking young fellow came forward from the inn-yard and gave them such a welcome to the place as they had not met with before at any inn they stopped at. He was presently followed by an oldish lady who called him *le Petit*, though he was a great strapping fellow of two or three-and-twenty, while he in turn addressed the old lady as "*Maman*." These two seemed to vie with each other in their efforts to make our travellers comfortable.

A blazing fire was soon lit in the best bedroom, which Mr. Fudge insisted on resigning to his friend, and in half an hour the first instalment of a most excellent dinner made its appearance, and was placed on a table which was drawn out in front of the fire. There was something wonderfully snug about that dinner in a bedroom, with half a forest of logs roaring in the chimney; and as *le Petit* set down each dish he said "*Là*" in a comfortable manner, as if he was a juggler performing a trick.

But this was not all. *Chanceaux*, it appeared, was a wonderful place, enjoying a speciality for a peculiar kind of preserve, made from a berry only found in that particular neighbourhood, and bearing the name of *épine-vinette*. *Maman* brought in herself a dish of these berries to conclude the feast, and waited to see their effect on the travellers.

She might well look confident about them. Never were such berries; never was such preserve as that

since berries and preserves have existed. Never was such a blending of acid and sweet with some other indescribable flavour, which the reader must journey to Chanceaux if he wants to know about. To attempt to give any idea of that ruby-compound in words would be simply to do it an injury. We want some more luscious medium than printer's ink in which to discourse of this marvellous preserve.

But not the juice of the *épine-vinette*, not the partridges, not the hearty welcome and the many other attractions of M. Chopin's inn could detain our travellers on the road. They were up betimes next morning, and ready to start almost with the sun's career. "Onward" was their cry. The season was advancing. It was the sixteenth of October, and though they had now got well on their road, there still remained, as the reader will see if he can find Chanceaux in his map of France, a great deal to be done. There were rumours, too, of a tremendous descent, and a tremendous hill which lay between them and Dijon, and both the travellers felt a longing to attack these difficulties and get them over.

As they journeyed along that morning, the two friends were continually straining their eyes whenever they came to the top of any rising ground in the hope of seeing this great hill before them; but a very small rise near at hand will hide a perfect mountain at a distance, and there was nothing to be seen yet. The plan of our travellers for this day was to rest at the small town at St. Seine, which was distant only about eight miles from Chanceaux, where they had passed the night, and in the afternoon to get on to the Val de Suzon, where they had been told they might expect

to find a tolerable inn. The next day they would reach Dijon very easily.

The distance from Chanceaux to St. Seine was so short that it was still quite early in the morning—about half-past nine o'clock only—when Mr. Fudge and his friend found themselves descending the steep zigzag of the hill which overhangs the lovely valley of St. Seine, and they got into the inn in excellent time for a second and substantial breakfast.

What a disturbing thing is a new idea which changes your preconceived plans. When the possibility strikes us for the first time of performing some achievement which we are not quite sure we can carry through, how profoundly wretched we make ourselves with incessant consideration of all that is to be said for and against the execution of our project. Can it be done? No; better not to attempt it—and yet—

And yet—it was possible that Mr. Fudge and his friend might get to Dijon that afternoon. In discoursing with the ostler at St. Seine, Mr. Fudge had learnt that they were now only twenty-six kilomètres, or about nineteen miles, from the capital of the Côte d'Or. This piece of intelligence, which set before the two friends the possibility of reaching Dijon that very day, was very disturbing. The day was beautiful, it was still very early, and Dijon,—it would be such a thing to get to Dijon. They would feel then that they had accomplished so much, that so short a journey comparatively lay before them.

For already that anxiety to get to the end, which is such an inseparable accompaniment of all human undertakings, was harassing both Mr. Fudge and his friend. It was not that they were tired of their

journey; far from it. The pleasure of it far exceeded anything they had anticipated, and they both dreaded the flatness which they felt would fall upon them on their return to a tamer and more stationary life. It is thus with half our attempts at enjoyment. People get up theatricals, or organize some party of pleasure, and all the time that intervenes between the first preparation for either one or the other and their final accomplishment, is passed in longing for the thing to be done and over.

And so our two Englishmen were longing to get on. The Jura mountains lay in the far distance yet, and till these were attacked and conquered, their project—in which their credit was now to no small extent embarked—might yet fall through. The idea of getting to Dijon that very night had taken possession of them both, but perhaps Mr. Pinchbold's eagerness on the subject was even greater than his companion's. Haply he felt that every yard of ground that he put between himself and the town of Montbard would render slighter and more apt to snap the elastic thread which still bound him to the memory of the innkeeper's daughter. Haply he longed for continued movement, excitement, change; and felt that as these things had done much for him already, it was to them that he must still look for relief and a complete restoration. At all events, be those things as they might, Mr. Pinchbold was very eager to press on, and Mr. Fudge was but little inclined to oppose him.

It was true that there were certain difficulties in the way of the achievement on which our two Englishmen had set their minds. It was true that the distance before them was in reality doubled by the fact that a

descent of about three miles and a half, and an ascent of at least two, so steep that it was accomplished by a zigzag, or *corniche* road—it was true that this lay between them and Dijon. It was true that they had done thirty-six kilomètres of hilly country the day before. It was true that by hurrying on thus they would be less able to do justice to the magnificent scenery of the Val de Suzon, and would be occupied less with the pleasure of being in the valley than with the thought whether their horse would be able to drag them out of it. All these things were true enough, but then it was true also that *they wanted to get on*.

The idea of “getting on” positively haunted the two travellers. Their *déjeuner à la fourchette* was an excellent one, yet from the café au lait with which it began, to the partridge and dessert with which it ended, the thought of “getting on” was ever present to the minds of both Mr. Fudge and his companion. The walk which succeeded the breakfast was through a lovely country, but the hills and valleys through which they loitered only suggested thoughts of the hills and valleys between St. Seine and Dijon, and the idea of “getting on” beyond them. Even when they were sitting on a certain stone wall, basking in the sun, and when there appeared, descending the hill in front of them at a frightful pace, a thin gentleman dressed all in black, with a white neckcloth and no hat, who, coming thus out of the mountains, advanced rapidly towards them, turned aside from the main path to approach them more nearly, peered closely into their faces, and then retiring abruptly disappeared within some iron gates which enclosed a wilderness, and locking the gates behind him was seen no more—

even when this tremendous occurrence took place, it held our two travellers entranced in wonder only for a comparatively short time, and they were soon back again in their previous groove of thought, and pondering over the possibility or impossibility of reaching Dijon that evening.

At length Mr. Fudge and his companion came to the decision that they would *not* come to a decision at all, but would start as soon as Blinkers had had a proper rest, and would be guided entirely by such indications of force or fatigue as he should show in his general carriage and demeanour.

Now it happened that the general carriage and demeanour of the little horse were never more sprightly than on this particular occasion; and when our two friends remarked to each other, at the top of the hill which led out of the town of St. Seine, that the "hill hadn't touched him a bit," it may be legitimately affirmed that, from that moment, it was a settled point that the attempt should be made to reach Dijon that night.

At the top of that hill the travellers paused and looked back at the valley they had just left. Not far from that little town of St. Seine rose the small stream, which, winding and turning for some hundred or two of miles, mingled its waters at last with the glorious Yonne, under the bridge of Montereau—that bridge on which John of Burgundy was killed, and on which our two Englishmen had stood and watched the river's bubbles as they swept away to Paris. Wonderful to think that that small and feeble rivulet, shining among the meadows in a silver line, and looking so bright, so harmless, and so gay, should once have licked its

lips for prey beneath the walls of the Tour de Nesle, and should now provide the tables at the Morgue with more than half of their hideous burden,—just as wonderful as it is to think that the baby, which we hang over in the cradle, shall one day be a sordid wretch that grovels in the mire for gold, or a drunkard that men shrink from in the street.

Whether any such thoughts as these were in the minds of our travellers we are, of course, unable to say, but they looked long and earnestly at the scene before them, and turned to pursue their way with something of reluctance.

But if the scene which they left behind them was an attractive one, the country which lay yet unexplored was surely almost more so. It was not long now before they began to descend; and soon it became evident that this decline was no other than the commencement of the great descent which leads to the Val de Suzon.

The road was now thickly wooded on both sides, and it seemed more as if they were following the natural course of some deep gorge, leading into the depths of the valley, than a road which owed its existence to the art of the engineer. Lower and lower they descended, till a distance of about three miles of continuous declivity had been accomplished; about which time a very unpleasant stumble on the part of Blinkers, who only by a hair's breadth missed tumbling altogether head over heels, made our two travellers once more bethink themselves whether they had not better reconsider their determination of "getting on," and put up, after all, at the Val de Suzon inn.

It was while occupied with these thoughts that a sudden turn in the road disclosed a scene of such new and extraordinary beauty as made our Englishmen pause almost involuntarily, and banished for a time every other consideration except a feeling of the extremest admiration and delight. The profound valley, to the very lowest depths of which they had now nearly penetrated, seemed like the central point from which the huge hills around it had been split asunder as if by some engine of more than giant power. The mighty fissures left by this convulsion extended in more than one enormous ravine away from the common centre where our travellers stood, for miles and miles, till they could see no further; but the scene, which would have been unbearably awful had the sides of these huge gorges been left bare, was rendered beautiful and softened into something almost of a cultivated loveliness by the masses of foliage which completely covered the rocky sides of these vast ravines. The glow of a sun, not sinking, but toned with the glow of an autumn afternoon, added yet another element of softness to this scene. But there were regions here which the sun's beams could not reach, like the cold depths of some stern heart which the warm rays of charity may never touch.

This Val de Suzon is now little known, and few persons find their way to lie through it; but in the days when travelling *was* travelling, and not simply the conveying of human beings from one station to another—in those days the diligence or the malleposte, on its way to Dijon, to Lyons, to Geneva, must have thundered through this wondrous valley, and awakened the solemn echoes, which the fir-trees muffle,

as if the sides of this abyss were the padded walls of a question-chamber.

To linger in this beautiful place, to wander on and on crying still "More, more," of such a scene, was natural enough; and it is little to be wondered at that our two friends should agree that the inn at the very lowest point in the valley would be an unwholesome place to sleep at; and that its proprietor, one of the fattest men that ever wore a blue blouse and a pointed beard, had, as he stood at his door, the aspect of a bloated spider waiting for prey. At all events, neither Mr. Fudge nor his friend could bear to think of stopping. Every turn of the wheel, as the carriage advanced, disclosed some new beauty to view; and when at length, the lower part of the valley having been traversed, they commenced the ascent out of it, which was by a zigzag cut in the rock, both gentlemen felt that to stop at that moment would be to deprive their passage through the Val de Suzon of half its charm and interest.

Of course Mr. Fudge and his friend walked up the whole ascent, and paused at every turn in the zigzag to breathe their horse; there were plenty of large stones to put behind the wheels, which had been used often enough for that purpose. At any fresh stoppage of this kind, the wonderful effects of the now declining sunlight on the valley from which they were emerging called forth new expressions of delight from both our travellers, and made them congratulate themselves afresh on having pursued their journey, and so had an opportunity of seeing the gloaming form before their eyes in the lower depths of the valley.

The ascent was a long and very slow process. A steep hill of more than two miles is a serious thing to encounter, and by the time that our friends had taken their last look at the valley, and emerging from the wood, got out at last on the open country again, the daylight had disappeared, Blinkers was knocked up, and they were something like ten miles distant from Dijon.

A drive of ten miles in the dark with a tired horse is one of the most dreary and dismal performances in which it is possible to engage. The greater part of the distance had to be done at a walk, and Mr. Fudge and his companion were seldom in the carriage. At length a good piece of road seemed to offer an opportunity of making a little advance, and Blinkers was once again put upon his mettle; but he had not trotted twenty yards when he made a false step of so serious a nature that he plunged heavily forward, and though Mr. Fudge recovered him immediately, that gentleman felt with dismay in his soul that the little horse had been down.

Mr. Fudge was by this time deeply attached to Blinkers, and he really had not the courage to get down and look at his favourite's knees, so dreadful to him was the bare possibility of any disaster having happened to them.

"Take the lantern," he said to Mr. Pinchbold, "and just see whether he's hurt."

Mr. Pinchbold descended from the carriage, followed by Mazard, and holding the lantern to Blinkers' face, as if he expected to find his nose broken, answered joyfully—

"Not a bit."

"But the knees—look at the knees," said Mr. Fudge, in an agony.

"Ah!" cried Mr. Pinchbold, "there is a great white patch on each of them."

Mr. Fudge was out of the carriage and by his friend's side in an instant, and down on his knees examining the little horse's legs. His knees were not cut—indeed, there was scarcely a hair disturbed; but the white chalky dust of the road was upon them, and showed that he had touched them for an instant.

This was a dreadful blow; and as if with the idea that to obliterate the traces of this accident would alter the fact of its really having occurred, Mr. Fudge looked round him in all directions for some water with which to wash off those two hateful white patches which showed to such hideous advantage on the horse's black skin. They were on high ground, however, and water was not to be had; so Mr. Fudge was obliged to have recourse to his brandy-flask, and pouring some of its contents into the tin cup which fitted one end of it, he dipped his pocket-handkerchief into it, and set to work at the little horse's knees with such energy, that in a very little while they were as dark as ever again. But Mr. Fudge knew something of horses, and something of tumbles, and it was with many fears that the morning's light would disclose an awkward turn in the hair about his favourite's knees that he got up from his task, and returned his brandy-flask to its place.

Never was anything like the length and weariness of that night's journey. After the accident that had happened, it was impossible to think of proceeding at any pace but a walk, and unhappily Blinkers did not

possess that invaluable quality in a horse—of being a fast walker. So this funeral procession moved along absolutely for hours in the darkness and solitude, and it really did seem as if that last ten miles was more than three times that distance.

Over and over again did both our travellers now break out into bitter invectives against their own folly in having attempted to make this push for Dijon, instead of putting up at the inn in the Val de Suzon, whose landlord they now pronounced to have been one of the jolliest and most amiable-looking men they had ever seen, and who, they now remembered, had made a sort of courteous gesture of welcome to them as they approached the auberge, as if he made quite sure that they were going to stop there for the night.

After hours, then, spent in creeping thus over the ground, our two benighted adventurers heard a sound which caused a ray of hope to break into their weary hearts. It was the faint and distant sound of a railway-whistle. It was the most aggravating whistle, though, that ever was heard. For something like half-an-hour it continued to be heard at intervals of about a minute, but Mr. Fudge and his friend both agreed that they never seemed to get any nearer to it. At last, for a short time, it stopped altogether, and just as our travellers were coming to the conclusion that all chance of approaching any civilized place that night was out of the question, they found themselves quite suddenly driving past a row of houses, and shortly after they emerged into an open space full of lights, and passing under a sort of triumphal arch, were in the main street of Dijon. Even here,

however, their trouble did not altogether cease, for Mr. Fudge was so demoralized, that he "took" the door-post as he drove into the "Cloche" Hotel, while at the moment of his descending from the car-riole, his lantern suddenly sprang out of his hand for some unknown reason of its own, and dashed itself to pieces on the stones of the stable-yard.

CHAPTER XI.

Dijon, the Heart of the Côte d'Or—two Days of Rest, and the last great Division of the Journey entered upon—the Travellers arrive at Auxonne, and get into very remarkable Quarters indeed.

It has not been without many misgivings that the compiler of this present narrative has ventured to put forth a book of travels containing so little of useful information as is furnished in the pages of this volume. There is nothing here which is likely to be quoted in scientific journals, nothing that can find its way into statistical returns, or form the subject of angry controversy in our leading daily journals.

We are not describing a new country. We have no chance of interesting the reader with an account of how “we had now arrived at the great river *Hubbaroo-hooohoosh*, and had pitched our tents for the night on the high ground which stretches along its northern bank.

“‘*Wollop effendi hujja pore yallah-hah yah?*’ said I, as the swarthy form of my dragoman appeared at the door of the tent. ‘Are there any crocodiles about here?’ was the purport of my question.

“‘*Crunchem boney licku blood up,*’ was his agreeable reply, as he showed his white teeth; and sure

enough at that moment the tent cloth was lifted on one side, and the jaws of an alligator of the largest size (about six hundred feet from head to tail) appeared in the aperture thus made."

It might have been supposed, again, that as we have not got the luck of having a new country to describe, we should at any rate go to work in the established manner in tackling an old one. We are now in the very heart of Burgundy. What could be more natural than to enter into a minute description of the system under which the wine trade, for which that country is celebrated, is carried on? It would be perfectly easy for us to get access to the cellars of the leading wine proprietors in the Burgundy country, and to give the reader accurate accounts of the number of pipes of wine in *Monsieur Toechaud's* cellars; of the process by which that wine is made; the amount exported to different countries; the influence of the new tariff upon the trade; and a hundred other equally exciting matters of the same kind. We might launch out, too, into a spirited account of the vintage, and describe the "dark-eyed peasant girl, bending under the load of luscious grapes—a charming study for an artist."

Nay, even now we might repair our previous omissions, and hastening off to the British Museum, to which library we have free access, we might go to work under the head of France in the *Encyclopædia*, and fish out half a hundred or so of ancient legends belonging to the different towns through which our way has lain, and with them again we might lick our volume into shape, give it some resemblance to other books of travels, and so win a hearing after all.

Here we are now at Dijon, the capital of the Côte d'Or, the very innermost centre of Burgundy. What things might we not find out about Dijon even, independently of what we know by personal observation. We know its ancient buildings, which are not many; we know its streets, that are quiet but not dull, and lively without being smart; we know the pretty Place, with the fountains, at the outskirts of the town; and its market, that makes one long to settle in Dijon for life, and live for half nothing on the fat of the land. We know that the town abounds in sage-femmes, in confectioners, in mustard-shops; the last abounding to a remarkable extent, and suggesting in a singular absence of chemists, that a mustard poultice is here the remedy for everything. Besides all these things, we know the great church with a square façade like a town-hall, where the two figures appear when the hour strikes and hammer alternately, convulsing their whole bodies to do so, till the pipe which one of them has in his mouth vibrates again. All these things we might treat of—and of many more—at great length if we liked, but they are nothing to the matters which we might fish out of the Museum Library, and which would assuredly find a place in these pages, if it were not that this narrative has been taken in hand upon a principle which would ill assort with the introduction of such details.

The forsaken road, the wayside inns, the obsolete mode of travelling, the petty advances secured so hardly day by day, the strong chance of a breakdown and of the journey coming to an untimely end, the history of such a journey as in early schoolboy days one has dreamed of between sleeping and waking—

these things, and such as these, are what we have depended on for giving an interest to this narrative, and on those we propose to depend still, till we come to the journey's termination—wherever that termination may be.

Ensconced in a comfortable corner stall, and with lots of straw to lie down on, when he felt disposed to do so, the little horse enjoyed a period of rest at Dijon which soon set right the fatigue of his previous hard work. For two whole days he rested there undisturbed, except by the arrival of his food, and by certain periodical visits from Mr. Fudge, between whom and Blinkers a firm and lasting friendship was established. It is true, that there was one other visitor, who would not unfrequently drop in upon him and spend an hour or so in social chat. This was Mazard, between whom and Blinkers, it has been already stated, a close intimacy subsisted. In fact, the dog was no sooner brought in from following his master about the town, than he would trot off as a matter of course to the stables, where he would be found at any time coiled up on the straw under the manger, with Blinkers sniffing at him in a curious mixture of wonder and regard.

It has been said that our travellers spent two entire days at Dijon. They arrived on the evening of Tuesday, October the sixteenth, and on the morning of Friday, the nineteenth, they made their arrangements to resume their journey. In the interval between these two periods, they had plenty of time to see the town, to write letters, to go to the bankers for money, and Mr. Pinchbold to look to certain serious omissions which his diary had latterly sustained.

But when Mr. Pinchbold found that to repair these omissions it would be necessary that he should go back in memory to the inn at Montbard, the pen dropped involuntarily from his hand, and he determined that there should be a gap in his notes, and that he would take a fresh start from Dijon.

The Hotel de la Cloche was none of your provincial auberges. Mr. Pinchbold's room was adorned with a great flaring carpet, the bedstead was of polished mahogany, there was a round mirror over the fireplace, another round mirror over the chest of drawers on which the washing things were placed, and yet another on a toilet-table opposite the fireplace; there was a round table in the middle of the room, and the windows gave upon the street, which was all very grand and magnificent.

The government and staff attached to the hotel appear to have consisted of a sharp, middle-aged woman; a dry, uninteresting young man, wholly devoid of character, and, perhaps, son of the above; an inquisitive chambermaid; a boots, whom to know was to desire to crush; a timid assistant-boots, who somewhat mitigated his senior's villanies; waiters familiar and insolent, permitting themselves to laugh derisively at their guests, and screaming "Yaas" to each other down the stairs when English visitors were ascending them. Mr. Pinchbold speaks also of a stupid old man who generally pervaded the hotel, and who may have been its proprietor; and of a fat, civil, and well-informed ostler, who said that he and Blinkers were comrades at once.

All things considered, and bearing in mind especially that longing to get on which has been be-

fore spoken of as having possession of our two friends, they were both not sorry when the day of their departure from Dijon arrived. They were now engaged in the last stage of all their journey. The next great resting-place was at its termination—Geneva. They were within little more than a week's journey of their destination.

It has been already said that the road had been one and undivided hitherto—with the exception of the portion between Montbard and Dijon, where the travellers had a choice between the upper and lower road—it has been said that after Dijon there were two roads by which it was possible for them to accomplish their journey. The first of these, going round by Beanne and Macon, was the easiest but the furthest round; while the second, by Auxonne, Dole, Poligny, attacked the mountains almost at once, but was much the more direct route of the two. Undeterred by the accounts which they heard of the mountainous country they would have to traverse, our Englishmen, after prolonged consideration, came to the conclusion that the shorter road was that by which they would do best to travel.

In addition to the other reasons which both our travellers had for choosing the shortest route that was to be had, it must be mentioned that they had now an additional one, furnished by the state of health of our unfortunate Mr. Pinchbold. We have already mentioned that this gentleman's constitution was none of the strongest, and the continuous fatigue of this journey, and the wretched and unwholesome diet, seemed to be gradually knocking him up. It is not unlikely that the Burgundy wine, the commoner kinds

of which our friends had been now in the habit of drinking for some time, may have had some share in Mr. Pinchbold's illness; for that Burgundy is a rich, a bilious, and a gouty wine there can be no manner of doubt. There may be also a possibility that mental emotion may have gone for something in upsetting our worthy friend's health, and that his sufferings at Montbard may have contributed with the other matters named to produce the indisposition under which he was suffering. At all events, be that as it might, it was certain that poor Mr. Pinchbold was not in good health. His appetite was gone, he complained continually of sickness, and a low fever was upon him day and night. In fact he was in that state in which a man is thoroughly out of health without being able to say what is the matter with him, or feeling justified in sending for medical advice.

"Only let us get on!" was Mr. Pinchbold's cry; "let us get on to Geneva, where there is civilization, and help if we want it."

And so at half-past eight o'clock on the morning of Friday, the 19th of October, the two friends set off once more on the road to Geneva, which town looked now—as they consulted the map—really within some sort of reach. They were to sleep that night at Auxonne, a town which lay at about twenty-four miles from Dijon.

With the exception of a great growth of Indian corn, which was now observable in all directions, there was no new or remarkable feature in the country between Dijon and Genlis, where the travellers stopped for their midday rest. And indeed, if there had been

anything remarkable they would scarcely have noticed it, so anxiously were they now on the look-out for the first appearance of the mountains which they hoped soon to come in sight of. The next day, between Auxonne and Dole, they were to pass the boundaries of the Côte d'Or, and to enter the Department of the Jura, and towards that partial consummation of their wishes both Mr. Fudge and his companion were now looking eagerly forward.

A most superb breakfast, consisting of mutton cutlets, an excellent ham, French beans, and an extraordinary woodcock, hung to an hour, roasted to a minute, and served on toast in the most approved manner, was the only circumstance connected with the village at Genlis which left any impression on the minds of our Englishmen. This meal was done ample justice to by Mr. Fudge, but poor Mr. Pinchbold could make little of it, and was glad when it was over, and when he and his friend were walking by the side of the small stream which runs through the village. Later in the afternoon, and just when the travellers were starting, it came on to rain, and continued doing so till they reached the town of Auxonne. It must be mentioned that it was in the course of that afternoon's journeying along a very dismal road, with a row of yellow poplars on each side of it, that Mr. Pinchbold, seeing a large square stone, about four feet high, by the roadside, was at great pains to get down and examine it carefully on all sides, in the hope of finding some curious matter with which to enrich his notes. There were some provoking incisions which looked like letters on the surface of the stone, but not one single word could Mr. Pinchbold make out, and

he sighed softly as he mounted once more to his place, and thought of his barren notes.

Auxonne, the first fortified town which our travellers had encountered on the south side of Paris, was in a state of great commotion when Mr. Fudge and his friend entered it; for were not the military here again? Had they not taken up their quarters, in their beautiful condescension, at the best inn in the town? And was not the band banging and braying away before its windows, and all the population of the town drawn out to listen to it?

Now delightful as all this was, it had its inconveniences, for not only did Blinkers decline to pass the band on any terms whatever, but even when this difficulty was got over, by leading him by the head, when the interior of the stable-yard was attained, our Englishmen were met by the disastrous intelligence (made all the worse by its being delivered to a very joyous tune played by the band outside) that they need not take the trouble of unpacking the carriage or taking down the luggage, for—here the music became more joyous than ever—there was no room for them in the “Grand Cerf,” which was the name of the inn.

“No room for *one* of us?” inquired Mr. Fudge, thinking of his invalid friend.

“Not for half a one,” was the reply; at which the band went fairly mad with joy.

This was disastrous intelligence; and as it was only delivered by the garçon, Mr. Fudge required to see the landlady. He was not much the better for his interview with this functionary; she only repeated what her servant had said before. The officers had

secured every bed, every room, every cupboard in the house; and as to any other inn in the town, there were cabarets, certainly, but nothing to be called an hotel, nor even an inn. With this the landlady abandoned all suggestion, and left the two friends to arrange matters as they liked.

There was one more chance. Did madame know any one in the town who would provide beds for the travellers? They could, doubtless, take their meals at the inn?

"Oh, yes, they could do that."

"Well, then, surely," Mr. Fudge argued, "Madame must know of some person——"

"Some trustworthy person," Mr. Pinchbold put in.

"At whose house they could sleep for that one night?"

The landlady set to work to think this subject over, and after a consultation with her husband, in which the extraordinary word "*Devillebichot*" struck more than once on the ears of our two Englishmen, she retired, and having been absent at least ten minutes, during which the band played a dirge, and Mr. Pinchbold sat down upon a step the embodiment of human misery, she returned, and announced that M. Devillebichot, the chemist, placed the apartment occupied formerly by his "belle-mère," or mother-in-law, at the disposal of the two English gentlemen.

So Blinkers was put up in the stables of the inn, and the carriage was left in its yard; and Mr. Pinchbold got off his door-step, and whispering, "a chemist—we shall be poisoned," in his companion's ear followed the landlady's son (a boy in a precocious uniform, who was to show them the way) into the street.

The announcement of the landlady that her friend the chemist would supply a couple of rooms would have been more to the purpose if she had said that this prop of pharmacy would supply a dozen rooms. On reaching the abode of Devillebichot, the travellers were conducted by the military boy, first of all, through a front shop with nothing in it, and then through a back shop with nothing in it, and then past a glazed-door, through which a bearded man, of hideous and malignant appearance, was glaring at them. After that they descended two steps, falling heavily, and then they pursued to its utmost limits a long dark passage; after which they ascended one step, stumbling slightly, and emerged into a court-yard, full of bottles, some empty and some full, of green and yellow poisons, which bottles were intimately mixed up with wicked-looking crucibles, and retorts, and furnaces, and glass bowls, and broken pestles and mortars, in which weeds had taken root, sprouting deadly nightshade before Mr. Pinchbold's very eyes. And now having got past all these chemical horrors, and still following the military boy, they ascend an outside stair at the end of the yard, passing a picture of the Magdalen, the paint of which is falling off in chips; and then, going through another glass-door, they enter another passage, of incredible length and hideous darkness, and so they reach, at length, a door, which has to be unlocked, and which opens into a large empty room, opening into another empty room, which leads to two more, which last have no windows of their own communicating with the outer air, but prey upon those rooms which have such windows, and cheat them out of a little light by means of an *œil-de-bœuf*, while they, in

turn, are preyed upon by other yet darker apartments, also having yeux-de-bœuf, and so remote now from the light outside, that it is barely possible to discern certain dreadful wares which lie on shelves, and are scattered about the floor—portions of abandoned and torn wearing apparel, superannuated bonnets, empty bandboxes, mangy mattresses, dried herbs, and in one corner, upon a chair, a shapeless mass, covered with a dirty sheet, hideously suggestive of having a human form beneath it.

All these rooms communicated with one another by means of endless doors, and the reason why they were all placed at the disposal of Mr. Fudge and his companion was—as alleged by the wife of Deville-bichot, who was a powerful woman, with a cast in her eye, which made Mr. Pinchbold feel as if she always had that organ fixed upon him—the reason of this awful suite being at the service of the travellers was, that it had belonged formerly to her “belle-mère.”

Now, where *was* this belle-mère? that was the question. What had they done with her? Mr. Fudge suggested, irreverently, in consequence of the outrageous manner in which the smoke descended into the room when the fire was lit, that the “belle-mère” was up the chimney; but this was far from relieving Mr. Pinchbold’s mind. Here was a chemist, a man conversant with poisons, and here was *not* a belle-mère. It was very suggestive.

The obstruction in the chimney was of so malignant a character, that our two Englishmen were obliged at last to make their escape into the open air, of which element they took many and deep draughts to clear the smoke out of their lungs. Nothing could exceed

the badness of the dinner of which Mr. Fudge and his friend partook at the Grand Cerf. Everything that appeared at table had been—to use a mild expression—too well hung, and to one in Mr. Pinchbold's state of health, it may be conceived that this was especially distressing. The dinner, too, was served in a very little and very close room, full of very noisy and disagreeable bagmen, who showed an uncourteous disposition towards our two Englishmen which was very unmistakeable; one of them even—backed up, perhaps, by the presence of the military in the hotel asking Mr. Fudge whether the English were not very much afraid of the French nation, and seeming to take that gentleman's indignant reply, that the English were not afraid of anybody, as a mere figure of speech which left the matter exactly where it was before. It was curious, too, to see how all these men, belonging to a class generally very particular about their comforts, were ready to put up with the vilest food, and to be crammed into a little dirty room not half big enough to hold them—it was curious, we say, to see how patiently all this was borne because the inconvenience was attributable to the presence of the military. So popular is that service in the French dominions.

If the suite of apartments once occupied by “la belle-mère” was a dismal place of residence by daylight, it was ten times more so when our two Englishmen returned to it after dinner, threading their way along the endless passages as well as they could by the aid of Mr. Fudge's lantern, by the light of which, it may be mentioned, Mr. Pinchbold observed what had passed unnoticed before—that there were several

trapdoors of a very horrible, long, and narrow form in the flooring of the passage, phenomena which it was difficult to account for, and terrible in the last degree to leave unaccounted for.

Nor did Mazard appear to be any better satisfied with the quarters on which our travellers had stumbled than his master. The suspicious way in which that sagacious animal sniffed about every corner of that suite of rooms was in itself enough to alarm anybody, while, to make it worse, he would start up and bark violently from time to time, without the slightest apparent cause.

It would be difficult to define with precision what were the peculiar advantages which Mr. Pinchbold expected to derive from a prolonged examination of every corner of the apartments in which he and his friend were to pass the night. Not one of the rooms within rooms, of which the residence of the mysterious belle-mère consisted, escaped him; but when he came to that in which the mysterious shape covered with a sheet, of which mention has already been made, presented its hideous outline, the poor gentleman's courage utterly failed him, and he retired without having ascertained what it was which that darkly suggestive covering concealed.

Mr. Pinchbold had a keen dread of ridicule, and could not bring himself to tell his companion how that shapeless mass disconcerted him. It was before him all night long, and as he lay listening to those mysterious sounds which we all know the darkness has the power of bringing out of our domestic furniture, he found himself attributing them all in some way or other to that dreadful object. There never was any-

thing like the way in which that furniture of the chemist's took to cracking as soon as the lights were put out, and Mr. Pinchbold was left alone in the stifling recess in which his bed was made. Mr. Fudge occupied a similar niche in the wall in a room at the other end of the suite, and was asleep in no time. But Mr. Pinchbold lay—his illness making him additionally nervous and sleepless—listening to those explosions of the furniture all through the night.

The morning light, when it came at last, found Mr. Pinchbold a melancholy object, and as he sat up in bed and looked towards the slowly dawning light, his worst enemy, if he had had one, might have pitied him.

"Brotherhood of the sleepless," Mr. Pinchbold broke out, in that mock heroic strain which introduced a comic element into all that gentleman's complainings; "brotherhood of the sleepless throughout the world—I greet you this morning!

"Brotherhood of the sleepless, with heads unrefreshed, with parched palates, with eyes that are hot and dry and red, with sickened stomachs, with unquiet and excited brains, with aching legs, with burning feet, with all the vital functions resenting the beginning of a new day, whose demands they are unequal to fulfil—with all these miseries pressing heavily upon me at this moment—I greet you!

"Brotherhood of the sleepless, for whom this day has *not been separated from that which preceded it*, but in whose weary calendar the two form one, linked together only by a dozen hours of black disquiet, with the memory of those dark hours strong upon me at this moment—I greet you!

“Brotherhood of the sleepless, mingling on unequal terms with those to whom the past night has been like a thing that was not, so unconsciously have the hours passed over their sleeping heads, who slumber through the livelong night, and rise, indeed, like giants refreshed, fit, and more than fit, for the duties of the day; brotherhood of unrest, mixing with such men whose strength enables them to sleep, and whose sleep makes them strong, in a blest reaction; who need not those quiet slumbers, yet find them, while you who need them find them not; with a deep sympathy in sufferings whose full measure I know so well—I greet you!

“Brotherhood of the sleepless, who, whether the day before you is to be one given to arduous duties or to enjoyment, feel alike unfitted for, and incapable of both—I, who on this day can neither labour nor enjoy—I, Pinchbold the weary, Pinchbold the feverish, in one word, Pinchbold the sleepless—I GREET YOU!”

Poor Mr. Pinchbold! When all was ready that morning for the start, the bill paid, the carriage at the door, he made a pretext for returning once more to the apartments upstairs, and approaching with great caution that mysterious heap which had so terribly disturbed him, and summoning all his courage to the task, he suddenly, with the extreme end of his walking-stick, displaced that dreadful sheet, and revealed in one moment what lay beneath.

Vive la Bagatelle! It was the festal dress of shot silk, worn by Madame Devillebichot on fête-days and great occasions, and which was so rigid and swollen

with stiff muslin and other bulbous gear, that placed as it was in a reclining posture on a chair, and covered over with a sheet, it really bore a sufficient resemblance to a human form, to have justified—in the absence of the “*belle-mère*”—a certain amount of alarm in a less nervous organization than that of Mr. Francis Pinchbold.

The travellers had but a short drive before them, the town of Dole lying at a distance of not more than sixteen kilomètres—about twelve miles English. Both gentlemen, as they approached the confines of the Department through which they had been so long travelling, began to look eagerly out for symptoms of a change in the character of the objects which they passed by, and were even disposed to think that they already saw a Swiss element in the cottages by the road-side, which had for the most part their staircases outside the house, and were decorated with large wooden galleries or balconies as well. At last they came to a village, on the first house of which they read that “begging was forbidden in the Department of the JURA,” and then they knew that they had made a great advance indeed, and were in the last Department of the French dominions.

One excitement followed on the heels of another. Beyond this small village, which marked the boundary between the Côte d’Or and the Jura, was a hill of some length, and when at length they had reached its summit, a great expanse of country came suddenly within their range of view, with the Jura mountains for its limit.

In that fair and fertile plain which our two friends now paused involuntarily to examine, in that sheltered

region, thickly grown with vines and Indian corn, and watered by the river which winds and glitters in the valley, protected and girt about by the great ramparts which hide and screen the neighbouring country—in that lovely valley the traveller takes his last impressions of France, as he journeys into Switzerland, and he carries with him, as he should, the memory of a country which seems to comprehend in its vast extent almost every kind of climate and of produce, as in its noble scenery there is a specimen of every beauty which can make a land delightful.

And not the least pleasant feature in that glorious Jura plain is the little town of Dole, to which our travellers slowly descended when they had gazed their fill at the beautiful scene before them. Of all the towns which they had yet passed through, this that bore so dismal a name was immeasurably the gayest and most delightful, and when they had driven quite through it, and found a clean and bright-looking hotel at its extremity, with a public walk on a raised terrace in front of it, commanding almost as fine a view as that which they had seen from the hill-top—when all these agreeable features of the town of Dole presented themselves, both Mr. Fudge and his friend were quite disposed to congratulate themselves on its being Saturday night, and that they were to spend the next day in so charming a place.

Surely the inhabitants of Dole were humanized and improved by the prettiness of their town, with its little park planted on a platform overlooking the distant hills, and with its zigzag walks descending to the river. The time spent here by our travellers was very enjoyable, the sun shining out as if it was summer,

with such power that as Mr. Fudge and his friend sat on the Sunday afternoon on a stone bench, the lizard came out to bask, and Mr. Fudge perceiving this and beginning to whistle in a fluent manner peculiar to himself, there soon appeared in all directions the heads of others of the same tribe, attracted by the sound; so that in a short time he was surrounded by quite a large audience of lizards with erect heads and glistening eyes, and hearts whose beating was visible through the slender tissue that covered them.

The inhabitants of this pleasant town, then, seemed a more sprightly and intelligent race than any whom our Englishmen had yet met with. The inn was a good and clean one, and the people who conducted it very civil and obliging. Even the commis-voyageurs with whom Mr. Fudge and his friend were brought in contact at the public table, were unusually harmless and inoffensive specimens of their objectionable class. They were three in number, and were characterized by extreme youth—considering their profession—and by a kind of innocent desire, concealed in an absurd manner, to set up for rakes and mauvais-sujets of the most rollicking and dangerous kind.

“The sex!” says Alexis, “ah, who can fathom the sex; for my part I don’t profess to understand women.”

“Oh, oh!” cries Gustave; “hear him, Auguste.”

“As if,” says the individual thus addressed, “as if all the world did not know——”

“Bah! don’t you talk,” interrupts the first, again, “anybody knows what sort of a reputation *you* enjoy.”

“Figure to yourself,” says Gustave; “I arrive at some village, in the course of business, ‘Have you seen your friend Auguste lately?’ I am asked, ‘all the

girls here are in love with him.' I go on to the next town, I call on several tradesmen, the daughter of one of them slips out as I leave the house and runs after me—'Shall you see Monsieur Auguste soon? if so, will you tell him I am counting the hours till his return——'"

"Enough, enough," says Auguste; "it is not me, it is some other Monsieur Auguste. But hold! I'll trouble you for this, Gustave—who talks about *me*? How about the sign of the Lion d'Or?"

"Ah, not a word about that," interposes Gustave; "not a word, I entreat, or I shall begin to talk about the widow at Besançon."

"Stay, for your life, rascal that you are—you respect nothing!"

"Ah! ah! the mauvais-sujet—before strangers, too!"

"The ladies' man!"

"Well," remarks the first speaker again, "I see I have got into dangerous company. For my part, I've done with all that sort of thing." Alexis might be about twenty-two, and a very good hand at business. "I leave it to you young dandies."

"Dandies! he talks about dandies; who is it that has the cambric front, and the varnished boots in his portmanteau?"

"Who is it that was remarked for his Parisian style of dress at the ball at Auxonne?"

"I think I know an individual who has the reputation of being the most dressy man upon the road."

And so these youngsters would go on, with as distinct an understanding as if it had been put into words that if Alexis would accuse Gustave of being a *roué* and a buck of the first water, Gustave would do

as much for Alexis, while Auguste should alternately assist and be assisted by the other two when occasion offered. The fact being, that all three were as simple-minded and business-like youths as ever produced a specimen of lace, or pushed hard for "further orders."

The three "mauvais-sujets" enjoyed themselves immensely over their dinner, and by the time that Mr. Fudge and his friend left the table, Gustave was pleading guilty to having slaughtered the heart of the "daughter of the house" at the Lion d'Or, while Auguste was equally ready to own that the widow at Besançon was certainly enamoured of him, and that her hand and a very snug little property in houses were his if he liked to claim them.

CHAPTER XII.

The Mountains; the great Rampart of the Swiss Country; the Barrier between our Travellers and their Journey's End; the Jura Chain—how shall it be crossed?

THE view from the terrace walk at Dole made both our travellers very restless. That range of mountains which formed the horizon, and beyond which it would be necessary for them to penetrate, seemed an obstacle so formidable that they longed to attack it, and on the evening before they were to leave the pleasant little town at which they had passed as they expected their last day of rest—on that evening they stood late on the terrace, gazing with all their eyes over the ground before them, and studying those mountains of the Jura something as a general might study the position taken up by the enemy with which he was on the eve of engaging.

The day's journey which was to bring the two Englishmen to the foot of that mountain range was to be a long one. Poligny, the last town on the plain—Poligny lying with the very back of its houses against the first mountains of the Jura—was distant from Dole thirty-seven kilometres, nearly twenty-eight miles. Mr. Fudge and his friend began now to be well aware

of the great importance to their horse of a prolonged midday rest, and they determined, accordingly, to start on the morrow at an earlier hour than they had yet done, as they wished to get into Poligny by daylight—not a very easy thing to do at the latter end of October.

Our two friends were now beginning to feel a great anxiety and excitement about the solution of that grave question which was continually in their minds—should they get to their journey's end? It was curious to see how this undertaking of theirs, entered on as a matter of pleasure, was gradually becoming a grave and serious affair with them. If there had been some great and important object to be gained by that journey, if there had been no other possible means of reaching Geneva except by the agency of their one horse's legs, these two gentlemen could not have discussed the chances of the road more seriously than they were now in the habit of doing. This journey, to Poligny was to be the last of their long courses. After that the ascent of the mountains commenced, and in those precipitous ways they could only expect to make each day a very short advance. That was a mysterious part of the map, that shadowy region between Poligny and the Swiss capital. Long as their journey had been, the greatest difficulty was reserved for its termination. The tug of war was to come at last.

Another cause of the anxiety which our two friends could not help feeling, was furnished by the continued ill-health of the unfortunate Mr. Pinchbold. The poor gentleman had constantly before him the dread of a serious lay up, and really, to judge by his

evident sufferings and by his haggard looks, there seemed some cause for his apprehensions. So the reader will see that there were drawbacks to the otherwise immense enjoyment of these two English gentlemen, just as he would find that if he (the reader) undertook to-morrow the enterprise of all others which would give him the greatest possible amount of pleasure, there would be drawbacks of some kind or other that would keep his happiness a little in check.

The start on Monday morning having to be effected before daylight, it was necessary to make all the arrangements for it overnight. Mr. Fudge and his lantern were here, there, and everywhere, flashing about in the stable, in the courtyard, and the inn offices. For was it not necessary to see Blinkers take his corn, and to look to his comforts for the night? not to speak of the necessity under which Mr. Fudge always found himself of making secret expeditions to the stable for no other purpose than to gloat on the beauty of the little horse, or to sit for half-an-hour together in the manger holding conversations with him on all sorts of important matters. At these conferences it was not unusual for Mazard also to assist, but latterly, and since the indisposition of Mr. Pinchbold, the dog stuck more closely than ever to his master.

Besides seeing to Blinkers, Mr. Fudge had other matters to look after that night. There were plenty of things to be stowed away in the carriage, there was a necessity of getting the account at the inn made up in order that it might be settled overnight, and it is as difficult a thing for people who *want* a bill to get it, as it is for those who *don't* want one of these docu-

ments to escape it. Then, besides settling the bill, it was necessary to have some eatables left out ready for a hasty snack at starting, and, above all, some milk, boiled that it might keep through the night, must be secured, or what would become of the early cup of tea; and the early cup of tea wanting, what would become of the travellers.

To the persistently energetic and the politely importunate, let the reader be assured, nothing in this world is denied, and so at last it really happened, that by bed-time Mr. Fudge and his friend found themselves with their horse well provided for, with their bill paid, with a great bowl of boiled milk, and some bread and butter on the table, with all their packing completed, with the exception of their toilet apparatus, which was on a very slender scale, and with everything ready for action. The good-natured wench who had been indefatigable in their service had promised to call them at five o'clock, and they were to start, at latest, at half-past six.

About all such preparations as this, there is a strange kind of comfortable discomfort, and a pervading sense of bivouac which is very exciting, and so delightful, that the reader is to be pitied if it is unknown to him. To the writer of this chronicle such sensations appear to be among the most charming which life has to afford, and he heartily envies these two gentlemen, whose adventures it is his business to record, that short repose with the mysterious getting up by candle-light which is to succeed it in but a few hours.

Of course it is a safe precaution on such occasions as this to give directions that we may be called, but

it is always unnecessary. Both Mr. Fudge and Mr. Pinchbold having determined before they went to bed that they must wake up at a certain time, *did* wake at that time, and they were both up and enjoying themselves immensely in the shivering stage of ague, before the servant stumbled up-stairs to wake them.

The fact is, that at this particular moment the aspect of affairs is not exhilarating. Mr. Fudge is making fruitless efforts to light his lantern, in order that he may go down to the stable and see Blinkers take his corn, while Mr. Pinchbold is engaged in an attempt to boil water in the Etna, which might have more chance of success if he did not, in the intensity of his abjectness, pour the water into the saucer intended for the spirits of wine, distilling that last named subtle essence into the interior of the vessel intended for the reception of the water. Both gentlemen are watched intently by Mazard, who stands with his legs very wide apart, and who indulges from time to time in such convulsive and at the same time protracted fits of yawning, as threaten to dislocate his jaw.

At last, after Mr. Fudge has cracked one of the glasses of his lantern, he manages to light it, while Mr. Pinchbold having wasted the requisite amount of spirits of wine, contrives at last to get the Etna into working order. He then draws aside the curtain and looks out. Pitch darkness—not a hint of day yet. The intense cold, however, predicts that it will not be long before the dawn begins to break. Having shivered at the window for a little time, Mr. Pinchbold next devotes himself to the task of packing up

the night and toilet requisites which had necessarily been left out.

Those persons who are familiar with the art of packing, will recognise as one of the most distressing things connected with that occupation a certain hideous and fatal ease with which on some special occasion the things will fit into their places. The bag, the last time you packed it, was crammed, and would not shut. A lump stuck out here, a nob there, an obstinate bulginess everywhere. To-day there is no bulginess, and the nobs and the lumps dovetail into each other's recesses in an extraordinary manner. What is the meaning of this? You look round the room, you look under the bed, you scrutinize the washing-stand, you peer into the cupboards; no, there is nothing left out. Things are settling down more into their places, you suppose, and go into a smaller compass than they did at first. That must be it. At all events, the bag must be closed, for there is no time to be lost, and—

“Ah!” cries Mr. Pinchbold, at such a crisis as this, “I have been packing in my dressing-gown, my thick flannel dressing-gown, lined and wadded; and I have forgotten that its place is in the carpet-bag.”

This is the kind of discovery which you make at the last moment. No wonder that the hair-brushes and the slippers fitted in easily to their places. No wonder that the habitual bulginess and refractoriness at the moment of closing, usually observable in connexion with that malignant valise, were no longer there. That monstrous wedge of a dressing-gown produces all this, and now everything has to come

out again, and the whole packing process has to be repeated.

Back comes Mr. Fudge, redolent of stable. He has been kept about dreadfully, the ostler not to be found. He has got hold of him at last, but the time is getting on, and a faint streak of dawn has begun to show itself in the eastern sky. Is the tea ready?

Perhaps one of the most difficult achievements of modern times is to make tea out of an Etna. The moment of projection—or of boiling—is of so short a duration, and if you miss it, and the spirit-flame has expired, you are lost. To blow this flame out alone is no small difficulty. It eludes your breath in an extraordinary manner, and dodges you round and round the tin vessel whose sides it is heating. So that when you blow it out on one side of the Etna, it keeps in on the other, while even if you attempt a kind of sweeping curve with your whistle there is still a little blue flicker which manages to escape you, and by which the fire is presently rekindled. To blow out, then, the spirit-flame, to take the lid off the Etna, and to pour the boiling-water into the tea-pot, all in one and the same instant, is a performance requiring no small amount of dexterity and presence of mind.

Mr. Pinchbold manages, however, to effect his purpose at the expense of no greater disaster than a slight scald, which causes him to dance round the apartment and yell with torture; and soon the tea is made and swallowed, and the tea-things are replaced in the basket. The last bundles of wrappers are got together, the map, the account-book, the journal, all the inevitable things that have to be carried separately by hand, are resolutely grappled with; and Mr. Pinch-

bold and Mr. Fudge, with Mazard leading the way, highly excited, descend the staircase of the hotel, and emerge not without shudders, into the open air.

The day is just beginning to awaken. The twilight, so different from the evening twilight, by reason of its vigour and the absence of all languidness, reveals the dim outlines of the objects in the stable-yard, and shows the carriole drawn out in the middle of it. Blinkers is already in the shafts, and he is soon eagerly occupied in exchanging morning greetings with Mazard. Now Mr. Fudge looks to the harness, and finding not a single buckle right, promptly alters the whole of its bearings. Now Mr. Pinchbold stows away the loose packages, and establishes Mazard on the top of everything. The animal is too much excited to sit down, and the carriole being suddenly put in motion, is instantly thrown off his pinnacle, which he, however, reascends immediately; and Mr. Fudge and Mr. Pinchbold being in their places, and the groom having received his fee, the little party set off, with their faces towards the mountains, which some streaks of day begin at last to show looming brown and mysterious in the distance.

Our travellers retrace their steps for a short distance through the town, and when they have reached the middle of the main street they turn aside, and descend towards the river. It is market-day, and all the town, early as it is, is astir. The tradesmen, it is true, have not yet opened their shops, but they are evidently beginning to think of taking that step; and in half-an-hour the wine-shop, at any rate, will be in good working order, and some astute housewives will be on their legs feeling those of the fowls which the

market-women are bringing in in good numbers from the neighbouring farms. Mr. Fudge and his friend meet lots of these women now that they have crossed the bridge, and have got into the long faubourg outside the town.

It is a pretty scene. The sun is just rising, and pours its veiled rays down the stream, which, at this place runs nearly east and west. It tips the highest portions of the buildings about the river, while the shady regions retain something of night still clinging about them; for the shadows are not shadows half so much as they are patches of night, still skulking in corners, not thoroughly routed by the newly-awakened day. The roadway, too, is filled with the market-people making for the town; and there are all sorts of queer costumes, and wonderful children, and animals; chickens alive in coops, others that were alive last night, carried by stalwart women, who think no more of wringing a fowl's neck than you do of decapitating a shrimp.

The effect of all this, and of the day's rest in the quiet stable at Dole, on Blinkers is so stimulating, that it is all Mr. Fudge can do to keep him in order. The road is level, and on two separate occasions, before they are clear of the market-people, the little horse deliberately bolts, and is only stopped by immense exertion on Mr. Fudge's part, and perhaps by the expostulatory barking of Mazard, who thinks it necessary to take serious notice of his friend's bad behaviour.

But now the road diverges from the main route, leading to Lons le Saunier, and turns off directly towards the mountains, which, however, are not visible just now because of a long gradual ascent which is

immediately before the travellers, and which soon takes all the bolting tendencies out of Blinkers. The sun, too, is fairly overhead now, and it is beginning to be hot; so that eccentric animal is brought into a decent state of order; and would, doubtless, behave unexceptionably if the flies did not find such satisfactory pasturage on his round and well-filled stomach.

The village at which Mr. Fudge had been recommended to stop for the midday rest was, if anything, at a little less than half the distance to Poligny, and bore the name of Mont sous Vaudry. A hideous rumour had reached our travellers that the landlady of the little inn at which they were to stop had been endowed by nature with an ornament usually the exclusive prerogative of the sterner sex, or, in other words, was possessed of a beard of considerable size. Both gentlemen were rendered a little nervous by this circumstance; but the good woman turned out to be one of the most amiable landladies they had yet encountered, though certainly possessed of a very tolerable beard, and of a deep and gruffly-toned voice.

It was quite early when Mr. Fudge and his friend arrived at Mont sous Vaudry; and it was quite necessary to begin at once to think about breakfast. It was easier to think about it than to get it, and easier to get it than to eat it, when at last provided. Everything was, more or less, putrescent; and what made it worse was, that throughout the meal, the landlady—beard and all—stood by the table watching the two friends as they ate, or rather as they starved, and would never take away their plates encumbered with untouched food, till requested in so many words to do so; when she would ask, with the air of a martyr,

as she removed the offending dish, whether that was not a style of cookery to which the English were accustomed? At last, however, they were for a time delivered from this good lady's surveillance, a friend coming in, to whom she proceeded to narrate, with great minuteness, all the symptoms under which her husband, who was lying very ill in the house, was suffering. As it unfortunately happened that a good many of them resembled those under which Mr. Pinchbold also laboured, that gentleman began to think that this plain in which they were travelling was an infected land; and what with this and the wretched meal which was provided for them, became so despondent, that Mr. Fudge could hardly keep him together at all. Indeed, the poor gentleman must have been suffering pretty severely, or it is quite certain that the bearded lady's husband would not have escaped without one of his favourite prescriptions.

But for Mr. Pinchbold's ill health, that day's journey would have been one of almost uninterrupted pleasure. The market-people were going into Dole when the travellers left it in the early morning; they were coming out of Poligny when, towards the sun-setting, Mr. Fudge and his companion first came in sight of that town. It was yet many miles off when they saw it before them at the very extremity of the plain, the great masses of hill lying behind the town being now so near that it was evident that the ascent into the mountain district must begin immediately after Poligny.

Mr. Pinchbold shook his head as he looked at the prospect and then at Blinkers, who now, at the conclusion of his day's journey, certainly manifested no inclination to run away.

"And our way lies beyond that insurmountable-looking barrier?" he inquired, anxiously; "how much do you suppose there is of it?"

"I can't tell yet," was Mr. Fudge's reply; "we shall get information at Poligny; but I should think there must be three or four days at least of the mountains before we descend into Geneva."

"Geneva!" echoed Mr. Pinchbold, in a dismal tone, as if his hopes of reaching that capital were of the slenderest order.

Mr. Pinchbold's fears were destined to receive additional confirmation at Poligny. It was the last station at which the travellers had directed that letters should be sent to them, and, accordingly, they found a tolerable collection awaiting them at the Poste Restante. Of these not a few were full of the direst predictions as to the probable fate that awaited them if they attempted the passage of the mountains without having "some one with them who understood the country and the roads." To think of crossing the Jura without additional horses, or as one correspondent even suggested, "bullocks."

Mr. Pinchbold's imagination, rendered more specially active and sensitive by illness, was much affected by the letters which he and his friend had received. His thoughts ran now upon perilous descents, roads on the brink of precipices, insufficient parapets, and unfathomable abysses; and as he thought of these things, and associated them with the shying tendencies of Blinkers, the poor gentleman's nerves gained such an ascendancy, that when Mr. Fudge left him in the inn to go and make inquiry as to the real nature of the difficulties which lay before them, Mr. Pinchbold

called after him to entreat that the rest of the journey might be performed with the aid of bullocks.

Mr. Fudge had another matter to attend to, however, before he devoted himself to the bullock question. Ever since Mr. Pinchbold had been suffering in his health, it had been the business of his friend to secure for him before all things that one luxury which he could at this time alone appreciate—a cup of tea. The great obstacle in the way of furnishing this wonderful beverage to his sick friend lay in the difficulty of getting milk. All the rest was, with the aid of the Etna and the travelling teapot, easily accomplished, but the milk was hard to come at. It would, indeed, have been possible to ask for it at the inn, but this might lead to offers on the part of the inn authorities to provide tea themselves, when a china teapot, full of a lukewarm liquid, which was *not* tea, would be produced, preluded, perhaps, with the announcement that there was no milk in the house; for as *café-au-lait* is only wanted in the morning, and tea is not drunk in the evening, it is quite unnecessary for the inns to have milk by them late in the day.

So it happened that latterly, when our travellers arrived at a fresh place, Mr. Fudge's first task was to go forth with his basket-bottle in one pocket, his tin funnel in the other, and his lantern in his hand, in search of milk. And hard enough it often was to find it. Sometimes he would be sent quite from one end of a town to the other, with vague directions as to a certain house which was the residence of "*mère Lachose*," whose daughter-in-law had a cow, and where perhaps—for there was always a doubt about it—there might be some of the afternoon's milk left. Sometimes

he would be sent up break-neck alleys, where, even with his lantern, he could scarce keep himself from stumbling; sometimes he would find himself in a stable, sometimes in a cow-house, sometimes in a cellar, but ever with this one cry in his mouth for milk, met but too often with a cruel shake of the head, and the response—

“Ah, sir, you will not find that to-night; to-morrow morning, yes; but to-night, no.”

Sometimes, again, it would happen that rumours would get abroad that an Englishman was roaming about the town in search of milk, and strangers would accost him in the street and direct him to the abode of a friend where he might possibly find what he required. Something of this sort was the case at Poligny, where as Mr. Fudge was groping about and wandering from one house to another on his milky way, a tailor sitting in his shop at work suddenly sprang forth as he was passing, and entreated to know what he was in search of.

“Follow me,” said the tailor, when Mr. Fudge had acquainted him with his need.

Mr. Fudge obeyed, and first they went up one street and then down another, and then by a blind alley to a place where a great gateway admitted them into a large courtyard, which had perhaps once been that of the house of some potentate of the neighbourhood. This they crossed, and entering a small door on one side of it, they passed through a passage and found themselves in a large bare sort of hall, where, sure enough, were a quantity of earthenware basins full of milk, and a man and a woman dispensing it to

such customers as came to this out-of-the-way place in search of it.

Mr. Fudge tendered his bottle, the man who dispensed the milk looked at it, and then at his large tin measure, which had no lip, and he shook his head.

It was then that Mr. Fudge, with excusable triumph, drew from his pocket his sparkling tin funnel, and stuck it on the neck of the bottle. A burst of approbation came at once from the man who dispensed the milk, from the woman who assisted him, and the customers who were waiting to be served, and who, of course, had all gathered round in an acutely sympathizing condition; while the tailor, with the air of a proprietor and of one responsible for the stranger's actions, good or bad, looked proudly round about him, and said—

“The gentleman has forethought.”

It was dreadful, after all this, that the milk should only come to one sou, and that there was no possible pretext for feeing the tailor.

The information which Mr. Fudge picked up as to the nature of the road from Poligny to Geneva, and which he brought, together with his bottle of milk, straight to his sick friend, was of a mixed and somewhat doubtful character.

The distance was not great, but the mountainous nature of the road made it necessary that the journey should be divided into numerous stages, and that they should only make a very small advance each day. As to the bullock question—at mention of which Mr. Pinchbold pricked up his ears—there was nothing to be said about it. Those animals were seldom or never employed in these parts, whatever might be the case

on the Alps; but it had been suggested to him by one of the stable authorities that it would be necessary for them to have the help of an additional *horse*, while another was of an opinion that if the travellers did not attempt long distances, even that assistance would not be required.

There occurs, just before the time with which we are at present occupied, a hiatus in those notes of Mr. Pinchbold from which we have occasionally extracted, and his verbal pictures of the characteristics of the room he occupies, and his summary of the officials with whom he is brought in contact at the different hotels, are both occasionally interrupted. At Poligny, however, Mr. Pinchbold resumes his note-book, and we hear something of an "exceedingly aged lady at the head of the establishment, who seems to be always plucking partridges by the kitchen fire, and of a chambermaid also very old, but possessed of amiable manners, and kept in a state of perpetual hilarity by continual contemplation of the much more advanced age of her mistress, suggesting the immense amount of time which she (the chambermaid) has yet got before her." Mr. Pinchbold speaks of other aged women about the kitchen in great numbers, whose position it would be difficult to define with precision.

But Mr. Pinchbold's notes are short and hurried. He is anxious more than ever to "get on." There are those mountains still to climb. Geneva lies beyond them. The long, long journey, thought of as a day-dream in the Calais lodgings, is it possible that in two or three days more it will be an accomplished fact?

CHAPTER XIII.

The Ascent begins, and the two Friends gradually make their Way into the very Heart of the Jura Mountains. On the fourth Day, at about Noon, they come in Sight of the Alps!

AT about ten o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, the twenty-third of October, Mr. Fudge and his companion took a solemn leave of the octogenarian landlady of the inn at Poligny, and, with the whole hotel staff drawn out to watch them, set off for Champagnole, their first resting-place upon the hills. Their plan was to sleep at that place on Tuesday night, on Wednesday at St. Laurent, on Thursday at Les Rousses, on Friday at Gex, and on Saturday—at Geneva.

The actual distance which our travellers had now to accomplish was really not more than about eighty-seven miles, for which they had, as we have seen, given themselves no less than five days. Nor was this allowance by any means an extravagant one, the mountainous character of the road being taken into consideration.

The ascent began almost before the last house in Poligny was left behind, and after continuing for some considerable time in a straight line, the road at length turned on itself, and our two friends found that they had accomplished the first of those parallels, if they

may be called so, by which the operation of besieging a mountain is carried on. The procession was now quite a solemn one. It was headed by Mazard, who, adapting his movements to those of his companions, led the way at a slow pace, and turned from time to time, as if to encourage his friend and companion in the shafts. Blinkers seemed to derive much comfort from this considerate behaviour of the dog, and followed closely with the carriole. Mr. Fudge walked by his side holding the reins, and bearing on his shoulder the drag, which was a very clumsy one, and with its chain was of such enormous weight that this humane gentleman considered it necessary to relieve the little horse of such an additional burden. Mr. Pinchbold followed behind with an immense stone, which it was his pride to place behind the wheel whenever the party halted for breath.

Such stoppages were very frequent, as the reader may imagine, in an ascent of upwards of *three miles and a half* cut in the mountain side. Sometimes when they halted thus, the travellers would find themselves taking a bird's-eye view of the town of Poligny, as the road turned so continually on itself in its zigzags, that from many points of the ascent they could almost have rolled a stone down to the town as it lay at a giddy distance beneath them. Sometimes they would gain a glimpse of the great plain of France which they were leaving behind them, and sometimes they would pause with their faces towards the mountains, or looking down into the deep ravines whose crevices were filled with autumn foliage descending in pointed strips to the valley.

With these continual stoppages, sometimes after

not more than a hundred yards of progress, that long ascent seemed almost endless. Continually, when they thought that the whole distance *must* of a certainty be accomplished, they would look up and see the zigzag lines which they had yet to deal with high above their heads. Slowly they crawled along in the order we have described, and it was not till almost all hope had deserted Mr. Pinchbold, that a final turn brought them in sight of a piece of straight road, which, though still ascending, showed so far in front of them, that there was some hope, at any rate, that the last parallel of this mountain siege had been traversed. There remained, however, a long and steep ascent in a direct line, and beyond this a chain of smaller hills, one succeeding another, so that by the time when the travellers had reached the little village of Montrond, which was only about nine miles from Poligny, it became evident to both Mr. Fudge and his friend, that Blinkers stood in need of a rest, and that it would not be wise to attempt to carry out their original intention, of driving straight through to Champagnole.

They could afford a short time for repose; the first great struggle was over, they had climbed the mountain side and might rest awhile on the top. The rest of their day's journey (only about eight miles) was chiefly on the level to which they had attained, with a descent at the end of it, the little town of Champagnole lying in a great valley among the hills.

It was one of the small annoyances connected with a midday stoppage, that the people at every little roadside inn where our travellers were inclined to put up their horse, and did not want to put them-

selves up also, would always importune them to come into the house and spend the hours of repose there rather than in the open air. It is a characteristic of provincials all the world over to love being in-doors, and to abhor out-door pursuits and fresh air—a good instance, by the bye, of that general perversity of things which stares us so continually in the face in the course of our progress through this vale of tears.

The proprietors of the auberge at Montrond were particularly importunate in forcing their hospitality upon our travellers, and would really not take “No” for an answer in the matter, till Mr. Pinchbold, observing a very small ruin, about the size of a large arm-chair, on the top of a green mound at a little distance, and looking like a decayed stump in a toothless jaw, announced that he and his friend were bent on going to inspect the castle.

“What castle?” shrieked the landlady.

Mr. Pinchbold pointed to the decayed tooth.

The astonishment of the landlady knew no bounds. “*That* a castle—why, nobody had ever been to see it since she had kept the inn. She had lived in that village forty years, and *she* had never been to see it; her husband, her children—nobody had ever been to see it; it was inconceivable.”

It was an unlucky hit of Mr. Pinchbold's, and his harmless ruse to get away from the inn was cruelly rewarded. The landlady having exhausted her powers of persuasion in trying to induce the two friends not to go to the castle; and finding it all of no avail, next harassed them with offers of a guide. “Her children,” who, by the bye, she had just said had

never been to the spot, "her servant-maid, she herself, her husband, all the village would go."

These friendly overtures our two friends heard echoing in the distance as they fled before them, and casting themselves down at length upon the turf which covered the circular mound from which the village took its name, abandoned themselves to repose. But they had not quite done with the castle even yet, for on their return to the inn, when the time came for resuming their journey, they were besieged with questions about this grievous old fragment of masonry; and when they frankly owned that they had not been to see it after all, their conduct in leaving Montrond without seeing the castle was regarded with quite as much astonishment as had attended their proposal to visit it.

"What! they had come all the way from Poligny to see the ruin, and were going back without?"

"No, they were not going back," said Mr. Fudge; "they were going away—going on to Champagnole."

"What! going away altogether without seeing it; leaving that part of the country, perhaps, for some considerable time?"

"Yes," Mr. Fudge said; "probably for a very considerable time."

"And going without visiting the town of Montrond! Oh, surely it was impossible; it could not be,"—by this time the travellers were in the carriage again,— "they would think better of it"—Mr. Fudge had taken the reins—"they would dismount, they would put up the horse, they would repair their mistake."

"As soon think of repairing the castle," said Mr. Fudge, as he and his friend drove off, throwing a

franc to the landlady's little boy, that he might not lose anything by not having officiated as their guide, and leaving the whole household in a profound state of astonishment at their arrival, at their departure, at everything, in short, connected with them.

A valley of immense extent, a great plain with hills all round and beyond it, forests of firs lit up and clothed with a royal robe of purple by the evening sun, which turned to gold the distant villages, scattered here and there, in different parts of this great and beautiful valley, such was the prospect which burst upon the travellers as they reached a certain ridge of hill late in the afternoon of their first day among the mountains. One of those golden villages—the largest, with some pretensions to be called a town—was Champagnole, their resting-place for the night; and to it, after a brief pause to do justice to the wonderful scene before them, they descended, arriving there just as the darkness began to settle down on the valley, and the water-mists to rise from the river which coursed through the town.

Few things are more discouraging to a tired horse than to find at the close of a day's march that he is passing through the whole length of a town, and that to all appearance he is not going to stop at any one of the houses which he leaves behind him so reluctantly. The inn at which our travellers had been recommended to pass the night at Champagnole lay quite outside the town, and at the other end of it from that by which they had entered. There was even a little bit of country, a turn in the road, and a bridge over the river to be traversed before the hotel was arrived at, and the despair of Blinkers may be

imagined when he found himself called upon at that late hour thus to abandon, as it appeared, the town where he had calculated on passing the night. It may have been that this was the reason why, when the inn was at last reached, this eccentric animal repeated once more the performance by which he had distinguished himself before at Villeneuve-sur-Yonne, on the memorable occasion when Mr. Pinchbold rushed so courageously to his head, and arrested him in full career.

On this occasion, however, Mr. Pinchbold was out of the way, having gone upstairs immediately on his arrival to lie down, for the poor gentleman was still suffering hugely from indisposition. Mr. Fudge was assisting the ostler to undo the harness, when the little horse taking fright at something or other, or perhaps anxious to make short work of it, suddenly bolted, with the carriage attached to him by a single strap.

There seemed really more danger of some disaster at this time than on the two previous occasions when Blinkers had bolted in the same manner, for there was at the end of the long enclosure, before the inn door, a dead wall, towards which he was now galloping with all his might. The groom, who was nearer to his head than Mr. Fudge, hung on to the bit resolutely, but he was powerless to stop the now thoroughly frightened animal, and was dragged along at a terrific pace. Mr. Fudge, following at the top of his speed, gave up all for lost as he saw the carriole getting nearer and nearer to the wall, and there is no doubt that at this particular moment there flashed into his mind — for thought moves quicker

than even a runaway horse—a conviction that both horse and carriage would certainly be dashed to pieces, and that the journey begun at Calais would end at Champagnole instead of Geneva.

There is no doubt that this conviction would have been verified but for the presence of mind and knowledge of his calling displayed at this time by the ostler, who, finding himself now within a few feet of the wall, suddenly had recourse to the last desperate expedient of seizing the turbulent Blinkers by the nose, and so stopping, by a violent pressure, his breath and his progress together at one and the same moment.

As it was, the sudden stoppage was not effected without a mighty and alarming crash, the carriole having gained such an impetus that the splash-board was brought into violent collision with the suddenly-arrested horse, and being made of wood was splintered in all directions in an instant. Wonderful to relate, there was no further damage done. Blinkers' head was not six inches from the wall when Mr. Fudge arrived at the scene of action, and there is no doubt that if the groom had not succeeded in stopping him when he did, both the horse and the carriole must have been seriously injured if not rendered utterly useless.

To inspect both carefully all over by the aid of his lantern, was Mr. Fudge's first act after acknowledging the share which the ostler had had in the recent transaction. His next was to hasten into the inn and reassure Mr. Pinchbold.

"I had a presentiment," said that gentleman, who had heard the noise made by Blinkers' escapade—"I had a presentiment," he said, turning towards Mr.

Fudge as he entered the room, "that we should never reach Geneva."

Mr. Fudge lost no time in informing his friend that as far as he could at present tell, there seemed every reason to think that this sinister foreboding might be safely disregarded. He spoke, however, to little purpose. Mr. Pinchbold's faith in his own presentiments was never shaken by anything of so little importance as their not coming strictly true. Besides, sometimes they *did* come true, for a gentleman who predicts every morning of his life that something unpleasant will happen in the course of the day is pretty sure to find his foretellings come right at last.

It was a curious thing to observe, that now that Mr. Pinchbold had got out of the region which might be called France *proper*, and up among the hills was inhaling an atmosphere that had something of Switzerland in it, he had parted in a great measure with all those feelings of alarm with which he used to regard, when in the heart of France, the people and the inns which he and his friend were brought in contact with. The fact is that France is a truculent-looking country, and its inhabitants are a ferocious and alarming race, as far, at any rate, as appearances go; a grave people, little given to jests and laughter, a fierce and independent people, with whom it is necessary to be much more on one's guard, and to adopt a more conciliatory tone than with the civil, not to say obsequious lower classes of our own amiable island. It may have been, too, that Mr. Pinchbold's decreased anxiety in connexion with terrors of an imaginary kind may have been attributable to his having some real cause for discomfort in the illness under which he was suffering.

That illness was not destined to be of much longer duration. The town of Champagnole was in a valley, and Poligny lay, as we have seen, completely sunk in a hole beneath the mountains. This had been much against Mr. Pinchbold's recovery, but the travellers were soon to rest on higher ground on the hill-tops instead of in the valleys. There are mountain breezes which seem to blow illness away from us as a blight might fly before a tornado.

The inn at Champagnole was not a bad one. It was true that the fowl—an article of diet on which our friends, since Mr. Pinchbold had been in ill-health, invariably dined—was characterized by that peculiar toughness which suggests its having been cooked with the vital warmth yet in it. But what was this? The rooms were clean, and the waiting-woman polite and obliging. It was at this inn that a dog, the counterpart in all respects of Mazard, made his appearance, suddenly, at the moment when the tough fowl was brought in for dinner, on which occasion it became evident that each of these animals considered himself deeply injured by the existence of the other, a sentiment which they lost no time in making generally known, by becoming suddenly stiff and rigid all over, by converting their hair into erect bristles, and by giving vent to certain deep-seated snarlings, very terrible to listen to. The hotel dog was removed before bloodshed had taken place, but he came back in the dead of night and encamped outside Mr. Pinchbold's bed-room door, at which he scratched and snorted alternately till it was time to get up next morning.

The morning of our travellers' second day among

the mountains—the morning of Wednesday, October the 24th—broke bright and clear, and the air was so exhilarating, that even in spite of his bad night, which had been partly occasioned by the circumstances narrated in the preceding paragraph, Mr. Pinchbold felt better already. The good gentleman, however, looked rather blue when he observed the shattered condition of the splash-board, and asked Mr. Fudge what he thought of their chance of getting to Geneva with an animal capable of such conduct as this? Mr. Pinchbold farther stated that for his part “he had a presentiment,” and was understood, indistinctly, to utter the word “oxen.”

The shortness of the distance to St. Laurent—not much more than sixteen miles—and the necessity of getting to the village in time to have the splash-board mended the same afternoon, caused Mr. Fudge and his companion to come to the determination of driving straight through and taking no midday rest, a resolution in which they were confirmed by the intelligence which they received at Champagnole, that they had no very great ascent or descent before them during the day's journey.

For some time the road wound (always slightly ascending) round the great valley on which the travelers had looked down the preceding evening; but after a time they came quite to its extremity, and entered a pass among the rocks, one of those roads which seem cut in the side of a ravine, with the steep cliff on one side and the precipice on the other, with a mountain stream rushing along in the depths below. By and bye, they came to a lofty bridge of a single arch, with less parapet than might have been desired

by one of our party, and then they crossed to the other side of the stream, and crept along with the rock still above them on one side, and the precipice below on the other. After some miles of such travelling they crossed the stream again, and emerging out of the pass, came to a more open character of the hill country, which continued the same, till tolerably early in the afternoon they found themselves at their destination—a bare-looking village, situated, however, in a fair country, with lovely hills in the distance all around it.

Among these hills the two friends spent a pleasant afternoon, while the injury done to the carriage was being repaired by the local smith. It was a curious thing that at this particular stage in their journey a new phase seemed to have come over it. The houses in the village, perhaps, had broader eaves, or there was something different in the look of the people; but certain it was, that up among those hills they felt a sort of atmosphere of a new country, and knew that their voyage was drawing near to its end. The inn, too, was a bustling, restless place; the stable was full of horses, and many a compact calèche was housed in the yard—such as are used in this hilly country by those who are obliged to frequent its roads. The road—the deserted road—was not quite deserted here, for there was no railway to supersede it; and so the inn was full of travellers, and all through the night and morning the hours were marked by departures and arrivals. The landlord himself was a man whom you never looked at without feeling as if it was four in the morning, and you had just got up to start on a journey—a thin, wiry man, with a courier's cap always on

his head, who made our travellers feel really that the end was near when he informed them that from that place it was only about *fifty-three miles to Geneva!* It was Wednesday evening — Thursday — Friday — Saturday.

Mr. Pinchbold seems to have been inspired with new hope and new energy at this place, not only furnishing in his diary the description quoted above of the landlord, but recording also that the service of the inn was conducted by a member of the glorious tribe of the "good-natured wenches," who did nothing but bow and never spoke; that there seemed to be no landlady, but that a young lady occasionally appeared pervading the premises, who may have been the landlord's daughter.

Here Mr. Pinchbold, to whom this is doubtless a painful subject, reminding him as it must of the tragedy of Montbard, breaks suddenly off and occupies himself with a description of his bedroom, which, in consequence of the fulness of the inn, he is compelled to share with his friend Mr. Fudge. "The room," he says, "is large; the two beds are placed in a line against the wall, with festoons of drapery above them. There is a chimney-board, with a picture upon it of William Tell killing the tyrant Gessler, while the paper on the walls is ornamented with little landscapes of the Italian pattern—pine trees, bridge, peasants, stream, rocks, and distant mountains—alternating with little sea-pieces, showing a boat (rig unknown) scudding along at a tremendous pace, and about to dash against a turret built out into the sea for the express convenience of captains of a suicidal tendency."

After a good night's rest and an excellent break-

fast, there being absolutely something to be had at this delightful inn dimly suggestive of a cup of tea, our travellers took leave of their landlord, who had evidently not taken off his clothes all night, and, with many directions as to the road, started for a certain village perched up high among the mountains, and bearing the name "Les Rousses."

The directions which Mr. Fudge and his companion had received as to their road left two routes open to them, one by which they might cross the Swiss frontier immediately after leaving Les Rousses, and descending the mountains to Nyon, proceed by the side of the lake to Geneva; while by the other, they would keep on the French side of the boundary line, and only cross it on the last day of their journey between Gex and Geneva. It was this last route which our two Englishmen determined on adopting. The fifty-three miles yet to be executed were divided then. There was, first of all, their present day's journey, from St. Laurent to Les Rousses, a distance of fifteen miles, but with a tremendous declivity, and an ascent of *some six miles* in the course of it; there was next the journey from Les Rousses to Gex, twenty-four miles, with the great descent from the Jura mountains into the plain; while on the third day, there was simply a fourteen-mile drive on a flat surface into the Swiss capital.

The descent of the valley of Morez began very soon after St. Laurent. It was very long, but the road was so admirably engineered that there was very little steepness in it, and beyond an occasional stoppage to ease Blinkers' shoulders, and to shift the drag from one wheel to the other, there was little to mark the

descent, which brought them lower and lower into a richly wooded ravine, at the very lowest point of which, and by the side of the stream which runs through it, is built the little town of Morez. To this place both Mr. Fudge and his friend took instantly a strong aversion. To begin with, although it was now the 25th of October, the sun was blazing down upon this valley with almost intolerable force; there was no air stirring, and a perfect host of horse-flies seemed to infest the borders of the stream. Then there was a strange and unnatural bustle and fussiness about the place, and everything was done in the street. But what was worst of all was, that in this place the car-riole was within an ace of being upset by a most determined shy on the part of Blinkers, who meeting a boy mounted on a sort of velocipede, as it appeared, in the middle of this valley, and seized with horror (in some degree justified by so unhallowed a vision), flew suddenly to the side of the road, turning round so completely, that as Mr. Fudge sat looking straight before him, the horse was positively out of sight; nor could he by any possibility have been got round again, or at all pacified and reassured, if two men had not happened to be passing along the road, who went to his head, and, after some trouble and loss of time, managed to get him into the right direction once more.

Out of this "detested vale" of Morez it was the ambition of our travellers to hasten with all convenient speed; so as they had only come about eight miles, and as seven more would bring them to Les Rousses, they resolved to push slowly, but steadily, on to their destination. The ascent before them was the longest

they had yet encountered, no less than six miles, and it was desirable to have plenty of daylight in which to accomplish it.

Long as it was, it was not however so steep as that which they had conquered on entering the Jura mountains above Poligny; for had it been so, it would scarcely have been possible, with the additional length, to have accomplished it unassisted. The road was a triumph of engineering; inch by inch, and foot by foot, it slowly and gradually rose, no one space of fifty yards appearing, as far as the eye could judge, to be steeper by a foot than the fifty yards which preceded it. This was not a zigzag or *corniche* road, but one of continuous advance. Rising at first straight out of the ravine, it kept for a time along the side of the great wall of rock which formed the left portion of the valley; but, by-and-by, it turned, and passing behind a vast isolated mass of rock, through which the way must have been cut with difficulty, it emerged quite suddenly on a valley of enormous extent, enclosed in a semicircle of rugged hills, sweeping round in so large and even a curve that the travellers could see before them an immense stretch of the road by which they had to travel hewn in the very wall of this Titanic colosseum. That road, reduced on the opposite side of this great valley to a mere white thread, was at last lost in the woods, with which a great part of the mountain-side was clothed.

How slowly they wound along that mighty semicircle! Had any one been by to watch their progress, that little black speck might have seemed as if it hardly moved at all, so slight and gradual was its advance. All this time the ascent never ceased—no,

not for so much as a foot of ground, nor was there one single yard over which they could move at a pace faster than a walk. Some notion may be formed of the nature of the difficulties of that day's journey, when it is mentioned that though the travellers left St. Laurent at half-past ten, with only sixteen miles to do, the sun had set when at last they arrived at the foot of the huge crags which bear the name of Les Rousses.

What shall ever displace, or what even weaken, in the mind of either of those two travellers, the recollection stamped on the eye's memory for ever of that glorious valley, down which the sunlight streamed towards them in such force that it seemed like some blazing chasm, whose end was in the setting sun.

At Les Rousses there is a great frontier fortress piled up on the tops of the rocks. Concerning the length of time during which it has been in progress, the amount of the garrison kept there, and the exact object with which this fortress was placed in its present position, we will not say one single word, simply because a statement of such particulars would be entirely out of keeping with the general nature and tendency of the present volumes.

There was but one room, with a dark recess, or alcove, in it, however, containing a second bed, to be had at the inn, which was a small establishment enough, bearing the name of La Croix Blanche. One of the most wonderful things connected with this inn was, that the ostler was a man evidently constitutionally afraid of horses, and wholly ignorant, also, of everything connected with them. It was quite pitiable to see the state of abject terror into which this official,

who might have been about seventy years of age, was thrown by Mr. Fudge's announcement that, in consequence of Blinkers' peculiar habits, some care was necessary in taking him out of the shafts. Indeed, so much care did he take that there really seemed some probability that the little horse would never get out of them at all; and there is no doubt that if the door of the stable had been large enough, Blinkers would have been taken into it carriage and all. This singularly misplaced individual never came near any of the horses in the stable without the most manifest terror; and when his duties took him amongst them, endeavoured in the most moving manner to disarm their malignity by all sorts of soothing sounds and conciliatory gestures and words. The good-natured wench—for there was here another member of this glorious sisterhood—who came to milk her cow in a corner of the stable, was altogether of another type, and evidently cared not a button for the heels of the horses. This young lady waited on our travellers at their evening meal, and brought a fine perfume of the stable in with her whenever she entered. She was assisted by the landlady herself, who was a young woman, brisk and sturdy, with a smart cap and a bright green gown, and plenty to say for herself.

The man who lived in a chronic agony from fear of the animals with whom a cruel destiny continually mixed him up, had informed our travellers that there were some formalities which it would be desirable for them to go through the next morning before leaving this frontier town, so they both got up at an early hour, and it was not long before the poor ostler was relieved of one of his sources of alarm in the shape

of the formidable Blinkers. It was a beautiful and bright morning, and the thin clear air up on these altitudes was what some deluded persons would call as exhilarating as champagne. Champagne, indeed! If champagne would make one feel as our travellers felt that morning—for this mountain air and a course of plain diet together, had made quite another man of Mr. Pinchbold—if champagne would make a man feel that mere existence was a joy and delight, that the licence to live, and move, and breathe was happiness enough—if champagne would make one forget the crimes of civilized life, or remember them with philosophy and mercy—if champagne would give one such a strong tranquillity of mind that ingratitude and servile fawning, and purse-proud insolence, should no longer be able to find one vulnerable point of access—if champagne could do this, then would he who is now writing these words send out for a pint bottle without delay, and have a desperate debauch at once.

There is some little delay in leaving Les Rousses, caused by the formalities spoken of overnight by the incapable ostler. It seems that in the event of its being necessary for the horse and carriage to re-enter France from Switzerland, after having once crossed the frontier, certain duties of rather a heavy nature would be levied by the French Government, unless the owner of these chattels is provided with a paper of readmission, which he must take out at Les Rousses before leaving the Emperor's dominions.

But what an amount of fuss, and what intricacies of mystery and formality are involved in the acquirement of this simple paper. What captious men has Mr. Fudge to encounter, what suspicious officials come

out into the road to examine the horse and carriage, and to take notes of their external characteristics! What machinery is brought out to take the horse's height, what shoutings take place of proper names, *the* man who is wanted for every particular purpose being always away and requiring to be fetched; what signings and counter-signings, and bandying about of Mr. Fudge from one office to another; and finally, what marvellous payment of petty fees—the whole amounting to eleven sous—what prodigies in all these different ways are performed before at last our travellers are put in possession of the document which will enable them, if they feel inclined, to bring the carriage and Blinkers back into the French dominions free of the frontier dues.

It was well they rose early, for all these arrangements have taken so long that Mr. Pinchbold, sitting all the time in the carriage, has had time to get quite nipped and frozen with the morning air, for it is the twenty-sixth of October now, and the mornings are cold and frosty. The travellers have a long day's journey before them, it being a matter of some four-and-twenty miles to Gex, where they are to sleep if they can get there, and the great descent out of the mountains into the plain being part of the day's work. This descent lay immediately beyond a place called La Fauçille, where they were to take their mid-day rest.

This La Fauçille seemed really to be almost unattainable. The road by which Mr. Fudge and his friend were travelling was one of such great beauty as to beguile its length, but still, when they had been upwards of three hours pursuing its windings as it

followed the course of the rocks in the side of which it was cut, they began to feel some uneasiness, and the more so that there was now not even an occasional cottage by the wayside, as there had been in some other parts of the road, nor anything in the shape of a village to be seen. So that, in spite of the beauty of the road overhung with trees, and keeping now for the most part a tolerably even level, the minds of our travellers were disturbed.

"I am afraid," said Mr. Pinchbold, "that we have made some mistake; if we had been on the right road, it is impossible but that we must have reached La Fauçille before this."

"I begin to think so too," was the reply of Mr. Fudge; "the distance has really seemed interminable."

It was just at this moment that the travellers came to one of those changes in the line of route which occur not unfrequently in mountainous countries, when the road seems to pass from one side of the mountain which it is coasting to the other, the turn being at so sharp an angle, that the traveller, after taking it, journeys in a direction almost exactly the reverse of that which he was pursuing on the other side of the wall of rock.

This turn in the road revealed in one instant, and only at a few yards' distance, an inn of tolerable pretensions, and one or two other houses by the wayside.

"I suppose this is La Fauçille, then, after all?" said Mr. Fudge, as he noted these revelations.

Mr. Pinchbold made no answer, and Mr. Fudge, looking hastily round at him, saw that his friend had raised himself slightly from his seat, and was gazing out on the road before them with such fixed intensity,

as caused Mr. Fudge involuntarily to look in the same direction.

"What—look—what are they?" asked Mr. Pinchbold, speaking in a breathless voice, and laying his hand on his companion's arm.

Mr. Fudge drew the rein tightly, hardly knowing what he did, and the carriage stopped.

"Are they clouds?" continued Mr. Pinchbold, in the same tone.

Our travellers seemed now to have reached the top of everything, and had, indeed, climbed to a high place on the Jura mountains. From the point where they stood the road began slightly to slope downwards, and turning by-and-by to the right it was lost over the brow of an abrupt descent.

A little to the left of this turn, and consequently exactly opposite the position occupied by the two Englishmen, there was at a distance of two or three hundred yards a great opening or chasm in the rocks, which rose on either side of it to a great altitude. The chasm was shaped like the letter V. Beyond that chasm there was nothing to be seen.

Nothing? What is that vast sea of dense white, extending—flat as the surface of a lake—for miles and miles away; and yet miles itself from the opening in the rocks between which it shows so strangely? What is that?

And over it, in the remoter distance yet, what forms are those that rise above the dense white sea? What are those vast spectral shapes that show so faint, and yet so clear, so distant, yet so plain? Are they clouds?

No; no clouds, though like those forms in shape

and colour have ever looked like that; no clouds have hung so still, no clouds proclaimed such silence all round; no clouds have struck two human souls with awe and dread such as lay upon the hearts of those two Englishmen, who almost fear to break the stillness as they say together in the hushed voices of those who speak before the dead—

“THE ALPS!”

It would be difficult—impossible, perhaps,—to convey to the reader any idea of the effect of the vision imperfectly described in the last chapter, upon the two gentlemen whose fortunes we have been following so long. It is but once in a lifetime, sometimes, perhaps, not that, that men can feel such sensations. Travelling by that road on the diligence with many companions, arriving at La Fauçille from Switzerland instead of from France, coming upon this scene even at a time when the rare atmospheric phenomena witnessed by our travellers should be wanting—all would be spoilt.

There may have been something, too, in the mere fact that these two Englishmen came upon this wonderful sight without any preparation, and had not been told that they would come into the presence of the Alps that day at all. Be this as it may, the fact must be recorded, that this sight was more than they could bear to look on, and that they both, by mutual consent, went aside into the house to recover themselves a little, as a man with his hand upon the coffin-lid of his friend might turn away for a time to gather strength before he looked upon the dead.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Last. The Descent from the Heights; its Length and Steepness. Above the Clouds. Arrival in the Plain after six Miles of Descent. The Feat accomplished—and the End.

WHEN Mr. Fudge and his companion went forth at last to examine more minutely the extraordinary view from La Fauçille, they were almost more astonished than they had been at first by what they saw. Advancing to the opening of the huge chasm which has been mentioned, they were able to see more completely, but not to understand better, the nature of the scene before them. They seemed, as has been said above, to be at the top of everything. The ground before them, as they looked through the aperture in the rocks, descended almost precipitously, and far on either side of them there was nothing to be seen but the sloping sides of the chain of mountains, of which the ground they were upon formed a part. Here and there they were able to detect the long thin lines of the immense zigzag by which their own descent from the mountain was to be accomplished. From the point at which they stood this looked formidable enough. But the incomprehensible part of it all was, that at one particular level, it was impossible to

say how far below them, the whole view was stopped quite abruptly (the mountain-sides disappearing, and all indications of the road being utterly lost), in that vast and unintelligible white plain which stretched from half-way down the mountains on which they were standing, completely hiding everything beneath it for miles and miles, to that distant region where the Alps rising above it showed like the mockery of the mirage, hanging unsupported in the sky.

These mountains were separated from the world by that sheet of white. What could it be? How soft, how fleecy, how undulating, yet how flat was its surface! What was beneath it? Not human life, surely, yet there was no tract on the map of uninhabited ground so large as this. Was there water under it? The lake, perhaps, the Lake of Geneva.

It happened that while Mr. Fudge and his friend were lost in these speculations, a peasant and his wife came labouring up the hill, and from them our travellers were able at last to learn the secret of those snowy plains.

They were clouds. The two Englishmen had climbed and climbed, and laboured and laboured on, till they had got to be above the vapours that hang over the earth, and were *looking down upon the clouds*. Not only was there human life below that veil, but they themselves, if all went well, would sleep beneath it that very night.

And now the thought of "getting on" once more asserted its potent sway over both our travellers. The difficulty before them, that great descent, seemed to beckon them on. The thought that they were in a manner above the clouds, and had got to descend to

them, was suggestive of such a work to do that neither of our friends could now rest or be at peace till it was accomplished.

The final instructions are taken at La Fauçille as to the route; the *six miles* of descent are described by the ostler; the steep part above the Napoleon fountain, the less abrupt, but longer declivity below it, are all set before them; and soon after two o'clock in the afternoon the authorities at the little inn bid them good speed, and they are off. It is their last difficulty on the road. From Gex to Geneva the way lies on a dead level.

The descent begins almost immediately. After passing the great opening in the rock—which has been already mentioned—the road turns away to the right, as if it were some wary mountain animal, which has looked over the edge of this chasm, and having decided that it will not do, has turned aside to seek a more practicable path. The incline is now excessively steep; and both Mr. Fudge and his friend (and Mazard, of course, who seems a good deal impressed with the importance of the occasion) have descended from the carriage. Mr. Fudge has secured the reins, and walks by Blinkers' head, encouraging him, from time to time, with cheery cries; while Mr. Pinchbold is ready on the other side to supply a huge stone (of which there are plenty on the bank) when it is necessary to relieve Blinkers' shoulders by a stoppage. The off hind-wheel is locked of course, and looks as a wheel with the drag on always does, the embodiment of obstinacy.

At first the road is thickly wooded, and the trees hide the immensity of work which lies yet before the

travellers; but in a short time they emerge upon the open mountain side, and see before them some portion of the immense line of steep zigzags which they have got to traverse; but the clouds are still so far below that they cannot trace the road that leads down to them; the sun is shining here, and the blue sky is overhead. What is it like, the friends ask each other, beneath the clouds below there?

They can now see the great wall of the Jura mountains on the Swiss side. Indeed, there is nothing to be seen at all but the craggy side of these mountains, and of the Alps in front, and they all rest upon a white plain of cloud, and seem to grow out of it.

The stoppages to rest are frequent, for Blinkers is a good deal distressed, and there are places where the descent is so abrupt that the carriole looks as if it would topple over him. Sometimes, after a short rest, the poor beast seems hardly to have courage to begin again, and puts down his fore feet so timidly that one would say he was feeling his way in the dark. Mr. Fudge is at his head at these times, and even pushes at the shaft to try and keep the carriage back. Mr. Pinchbold tugs at the locked wheel occasionally with noble intentions and doubtful results; while Mazard, true to his mission of sustaining and comforting his less intellectually-gifted friend, keeps his position just in front of Blinkers, and now and then will canter a few paces, evidently with the intention of convincing the little horse that the declivity is not such a serious affair as he seems to think it; a matter, however, concerning which Blinkers (perhaps because he has got the carriole behind him) is of a different opinion.

It takes a long time to traverse even that first zig

zag, and as the little group slowly advances, the steepness of the descent seems almost to increase; and as Mr. Pinchbold looks back, and feels how impossible retreat would be, or looks on and sees what is involved in further progress, it seems really excusable that he should wish that, at any rate, they were at the Napoleon fountain, or could get within hail of those still distant clouds. Mr. Fudge remembered Blinkers' tumble on the road to Dijon—his knees showed traces of it, though only in a twisted growth of the hair—and he felt also that an extreme of caution and great patience were necessary if they would reach the plain that evening without an accident.

"If we can only get to the foot of the mountain while daylight lasts," said Mr. Fudge, "I shall be satisfied."

It was a grand time after all. To men who have spent half their lives in London streets, where the houses over the way so confine and imprison your range of view that you almost doubt at last whether there is anything but Baker-street in the world, and whether Mrs. Jennings, who lets lodgings, and wears a black cap as she stands at the window, it not to limit your look-out for life—to men who have lived among such surroundings it is something more glorious than these poor words can tell to spend a day upon the mountain side, with mountains behind and on each side of you, with the blue sky above, and that white veil beneath, and the mighty Alps for your opposite neighbour.

By such slow progress as we have described, with frequent rests, when Mr. Pinchbold's stone was put in requisition, the first division of the descent, that por-

tion which was above the Napoleon fountain, was achieved safely. The Napoleon fountain is hardly, by the bye, deserving of so grand a name, and is, in truth, little more than a stone tank, placed by the roadside by the first Napoleon. Even from this point, after a continuous and abrupt descent of about a couple of miles, it seemed, unless the travellers looked up at the heights above them, as if they had done nothing, so much remained still before them, and so far especially did it still seem to the clouds beneath.

Blinkers was by this time a good deal blown, and evidently considerably fatigued in the shoulder joints, but it was fortunate that though by far the largest part of the descent remained still unaccomplished, the declivity was, as the ostler at La Fauçille had predicted, a more gradual one after the Napoleon fountain had been passed. It was still steep enough to cause Mr. Pinchbold considerable dismay, and to make Mr. Fudge himself feel anxious as he watched the somewhat uncertain footfall of the gallant but weary Blinkers.

Our travellers were pursuing their way, after the manner already described, making fewer halts now that the road was less steep, but still both of them walking by the side of the carriole, when they were overtaken by a man with a cart, whom they had observed for some time descending the road above them, and who they now noticed was observing them with some curiosity and surprise. At length he seemed able to master his feelings—whatever they were—no longer, and pulling up his horse, and getting down, he sent the animal—who appeared well able to take care of itself—on alone, and came and walked by

Mr. Fudge's side staring at him in a kind of stupid way, which was not unsuggestive of drink.

"It would appear," he said, at last, "that your horse is not much accustomed to descending hills."

"Not such hills as this," replied Mr. Fudge.

"There is no occasion at this point of the descent," said the carrier, "to take so much precaution."

Mr. Fudge gently insinuated that he was of a different opinion.

"Of course Monsieur can do as he likes."

To this Mr. Fudge assented.

"Above the Napoleon fountain," the carrier said, speaking always in an injured tone, "it was different, it was necessary to be careful, but below it they might even trot the whole way."

Mr. Fudge said, that on the whole, he would rather not.

"You might keep the drag on, you know," said the carrier.

Mr. Fudge thanked him for this permission. After this there was a long pause. At length the carrier seemed unable to bear it any longer.

"*Why* don't you get into the carriage?" he cried, desperately.

"Because we like better to walk by the side," replied Mr. Fudge.

On hearing this tremendous opinion, the carrier turned suddenly about, and, without a single word, plunged through the bushes on the side of the road, and in one instant disappeared over the brow of the precipice.

Mr. Fudge and his friend looked at each other for some time in blank astonishment, but observing pre-

sently that the horse and cart which had been under this gentleman's superintendence had arrived at the turn in the road which marked the commencement of a fresh parallel, and had turned the corner in perfect safety, our Englishmen came to the conclusion that this eccentric person had simply taken a short cut down the rock, leaving his horse to follow the zigzag road, taking care of the cart and himself as best he might.

Not long after this meeting, the travellers came at last to a point on the road where that strange misty veil, to which they had been so long descending, was stretched across the way, the boundary of it being so abrupt and so definitely and strongly marked, that they could actually take note of the exact moment when they entered it, the thick mist being drawn across the road like a curtain.

A little more and the mountains overhead were invisible, and nothing but the mist was to be seen above and round about them.

Long after this the descent went on, till even the six miles of mountain which they had been prepared for seemed hardly to account for the length of the way, and both gentlemen began to doubt whether such a thing as a horizontal piece of ground existed in the world at all.

It was dark when at last they entered the town of Gex, at the foot of the mountains, and Blinkers was so tired that he did not even pluck up spirit at the sight of Monsieur Richards' inn or at the smell of Monsieur Richards' stable.

Where have we got to at last? Has the reader a map at hand? If he has, and the small town of Gex

is marked on it, he will see how near we are now to the end of our tale. Geneva lies at a distance of only fifteen miles. Four long days have conquered the Jura mountains, and to-night the travellers sleep at their foot.

As they lie down at night to rest under Monsieur Richards' roof, are their sensations, now that their journey is well-nigh accomplished, altogether pleasant ones? The next morning when they got up for their *last day on the road*, is it with unalloyed pleasure that they remember that it is so? Throughout this journey they were ever haunted by that thought of "getting on." They have *got* on now; are they satisfied? Not Mr. Fudge, surely, who, as they start on that last day's journey, mounts so listlessly to his place, and sets the carriage in motion without a single crack of his whip, or a single word of encouragement to Blinkers. Not Mr. Pinchbold, who wears a countenance ten times more rueful than it has ever appeared before during this narrative, and who, when confidently expecting that his end was near, has presented an appearance which was positively jaunty in comparison with his present aspect. Not Blinkers, who is so stiff in the shoulders that he is scarcely able to get along at all at first, and whose dejected exterior is quite in keeping with that of Mazard, who of course knows all about it, and is evidently ruminating on his past career, and beginning to doubt whether or not he has been taken in, and whether the pastry-cook's shop inside the carriage is really part of the old concern at Paris or not.

The last day on the road thus begins rather drearily, but by degrees Blinkers gets warmed to his work, and

is able to do more than five yards without stumbling, while Mr. Fudge and his friend find an excitement in the thought of their nearness to Geneva which arouses them a little also.

It is quite curious to see, as they now do—they are not yet past the frontier—how gradually one country melts into another. There is no other way of travelling than that which our Englishmen are practising which would show this so plainly. The traveller who gets into the train at Lyons, and scarcely stops till he is put out of it at Geneva, has no opportunities of observing the little wayside indications of his nearness to the new country which must strike those who slowly approach it by the road.

They are getting nearer to Switzerland, the face of the country is altering, and wears a more cultivated look, it looks more innocent and rural than France proper. Presently a sergent-de-ville, with his cocked hat and sword, steps forward as they pass a small village, and, true to his country, demands to see their passports before they leave the French dominions. All is “*en règle*,” and they pass on. It is the last village on the French side of the Rubicon.

Presently they descend a slight incline; at the foot of it there is a flat piece of road, and beyond that a hill rises in front of them. About the middle of the piece of flat road, the travellers see a small board stuck on the top of a short post. It is much such a construction as the reader will find in any of our London parks with the hours for closing the gate recorded on it.

The travellers get nearer and nearer to the board, and at last can read what is inscribed upon it.

"LIMITE DE LA FRANCE."

They are past it in a moment, and Mr. Pinchbold feels as if the sky was brighter, and says that he seems to breathe more freely.

Although the aspect of the country had begun to change before that boundary-mark was passed, the difference between the two territories, now that France was fairly left behind, was almost startling. At the douane on the Swiss side no one inquired for our travellers' passports, and only a question or two was asked on the subject of their luggage, which yet asserted itself pretty conspicuously at the back of the carriage when the custom-house officer peeped into the interior of the vehicle. The whole look of the country was more cheerful and pretty than is the case in France. As our two Englishmen advanced nearer to their journey's end, they came to little comfortable villas by the road-side, with roses tumbling over the wall. Pretty cottages and chalets, gay little gardens and orchards, were to be seen in all directions, which, together with the hedges—it was long since either of our friends had seen a hedge—gave the scene something of an English character which was inexpressibly pleasant. Through such scenery the road lay now, the gardens and the villas forming at last quite an unbroken line. By degrees, however, the gardens became more rare, and the villas were joined to each other, and Swiss cars and other vehicles began to show in considerable numbers, and it was not long before our two Englishmen found that almost without their knowing how, a great and populous town was growing up around and about them.

And now they come to an open space which the railway traverses, and then passing on under its bridge, they cross a square, and arrive at a broad, open street, into which they turn by a sort of instinct. At the end of it is a great blue lake, with mountains on its further side, and Mr. Fudge and his friend, as they own that they have reached one of the most beautiful cities in the world, look yet rather ruefully at each other as they pull up at the door of the Hôtel des Bergues—for the name of this beautiful city is GENEVA, AND THE CRUISE UPON WHEELS IS AT AN END.

CONCLUSION.

LITTLE more remains to be told.

Step by step, we have tracked the course of the two Englishmen whose fortunes we have been following, till we have brought them from the door of the Calais lodgings to that of the chief hotel of Geneva. The story of their journey has been told and their progress recorded almost foot by foot. May the reader share in some sort the regret with which these two gentlemen are seized as they recognise the fact that the end towards which they have looked so eagerly has come too soon at last.

It is the end. There can be no more cruising now. The twenty-seventh of October has arrived, it is very cold already, and November is at hand. Mr. Fudge and his companion are engaged to spend some time with a friend who has a villa on the lake, and this visit over, it will be time to return to England, and that by the swiftest means attainable.

What was to become of the carriage, and of Blinkers?

There was but one course open with regard to both the one and the other. They must be sold.

It is not our intention to give any such details

concerning this last melancholy transaction, as we ventured to supply in our narrative of the circumstances attending their purchase. It was in every way a doleful and distressing affair. The travellers had got to look upon the carriage as a sort of temporary home, and upon Blinkers, in spite of his failings, as a friend and companion. The wrench of parting with them was a more serious one than the reader would imagine.

The two friends were detained long at Geneva by the difficulty of finding a purchaser to whose proposals they could even listen. Your Swiss is not fond of parting with money, and Mr. Fudge and his companion had abundant opportunities of studying the very great difference which exists between the two operations of buying and selling.

At length a certain riding-master who kept a manège in the town, and who was on the look-out for some additions to his stud, cast his eye upon Blinkers, and thinking that the little horse would be useful in his school, made an offer for the horse and carriage together, which, though still ridiculously low, was the best which they had yet received. The riding-master seemed a pleasant, good-natured man. His offer promised a tolerably easy future to Blinkers, and in the end it was accepted.

When the day came on which the riding-master was to claim his own, when the last painful act of the drama had to be played out, when the deed was to be done which showed that the strange enterprise—which the two friends had loved more dearly than they knew before—was really concluded for ever, at that time it

would be hard to say which of these two gentlemen was the more deeply stirred.

Mr. Pinchbold shrunk altogether from the last parting scene, but his friend found a strange kind of fascination in it, and descended with the riding-master to the stable-yard, where the carriage was standing forlorn and empty.

There were sundry matters to be attended to before it could be got under way, and Mr. Fudge left the riding master and the ostler engaged in these, and going aside by himself, opened the door of the stable in which Blinkers was placed.

The little horse was alone with Mazard, and the two appeared to be engaged in a highly interesting conversation, which Mr. Fudge's entry interrupted. There were no other horses in the stable, and all the other stalls were vacant, as there had been a great demand for carriages in the hotel that day. For the same reason, the grooms and drivers attached to the establishment were absent also. Mr. Fudge closed the door, and advancing to the dark corner where Blinkers stood, he entered the stall and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

The poor beast went through the usual established form which was his notion of fun, and laying his ears back, turned his head away, and began routing with his nose among the few grains which lay at the bottom of the empty manger. Acting strictly in accordance with precedent, Mr. Fudge should at this time have feigned to be oblivious of the presence of the little horse, but he had not the heart to perform his usual part, and so when Blinkers turned his head round, he found this disconsolate gentleman standing with his

face towards him, and still with his hand upon the horse's shoulder.

"So, it is over, Blinkers," he said. "I almost wish, now that it has come to this, that it had never begun: to turn you into money—though, heaven knows, not to profit—is almost like selling a friend. Alas! I have not many friends that I should feel the parting from as I feel this separation between us two. And what now has become of the memory of all thy defects—those startings and shyings, and those stumblings which have so depreciated thy worth—they seem all forgotten, and nothing but thy merit remembered. There was so much of that, my little horse, that it swallows up the remembrance of thy faults. For, besides that thou wert so strong, and so capable of labour, more than many a larger animal than thyself, thou wert gifted with the gentlest nature and the sweetest temper that ever horse possessed. Those 'flaws and starts' arose not from defect of temper but of nerve, and—I shrewdly suspect—from some fault of vision yet more."

The animal thus fondly addressed was by no means insensible to the affectionate language bestowed upon it, for he was nibbling with his lips at Mr. Fudge's hands, and putting his nose into the pockets of that gentleman's shooting-jacket all the time he spoke.

"And now," Mr. Fudge continued, "you are going to a manége, Blinkers, and you are going to spend your life in ambling round and round a riding-school, with small urchins and little ladies on thy back."

Blinkers was now occupied in affectionately chewing Mr. Fudge's left trouser; but it is one of the ad-

vantages of habitual shabbiness in attire, that the seedy are not obliged to pause in moments of emotion to consider their clothes.

"Heaven send they may be kind to thee!" Mr. Fudge went on, as he took the poor beast's head in his hands, and drew it towards him. "I would that I were able to keep thee, but I am poor and may not afford it, and I have business to attend to, and I must not spend my life in rambling up and down the world with our frind Francis Pinchbold, with Mazard and thee."

"Heaven send they may be kind to thee!" said Mr. Fudge again, as he raised Blinkers' soft nose to a level with his own face, and pressed his lips against the velvet skin.

When Mr. Fudge left the stable, with Mazard following at his heels, he was obliged to take his spectacles off and wipe them, for a mist had gathered on the glass.

"I have brought you," said Mr. Fudge, as he re-entered the room in which he had left his friend, "I have brought you Mazard back, at any rate. As long as he is about us we shall have something to remind us of our journey, and when we start again——"

"Start again!" interrupted Mr. Pinchbold.

"Yes," replied Mr. Fudge. "This journey has been too successful for us to abandon this way of life altogether, and I hope and trust that one of these days we shall be off again, and Mazard shall go with us."

Mr. Pinchbold, sitting with his elbows on the arms of his chair, and looking down ruefully at the

dog at his feet, shook his head in unspeakable despondency.

"We will have another cruise yet," said Mr. Fudge, with a kind of desperate gaiety.

Mr. Pinchbold shook his head again, and again looked down at Mazard, who was gazing hard at him, and wagging his tail slowly and thoughtfully, as dogs will when taking in a conversation.

"Never," said Mr. Pinchbold; "our travels are ended; besides, I have a presentiment."

Shall one of Mr. Pinchbold's presentiments come true at last?

The writer of these words, lingering over this last page, hopes with all his heart and soul that it may not.

APPENDIX.

THE considerations of expense and distance, the more statistical portion of this narrative, have been little dwelt upon in the body of the work. The extraordinary cheapness of the French inns, however, seems to make it worth while to add a sketch of the expenses contracted by our travellers during the time that they were actually on the road; while, with regard to the distances performed each day, and the length of time consumed in achieving the entire journey, these may not be uninteresting to those who would wish to see what amount of work a single horse can get through. It may be mentioned that in the statements of expense all fees to servants and other extras are invariably included.

	English money.		
	£	s.	d.
ST. OMER.—Hotel de la Porte d'Or; expenses of travellers and horse for two nights and one entire day	1	6	4½
ST. HILAIRE.—Baiting Bijou, and dinner for both travellers	0	3	10½
ST. POL.—Hotel d'Angleterre; supper, night's lodging, breakfast, and horse's keep	0	17	11
DOULLENS.—Hotel des Quatre Fils d'Aymon; dinner, night's lodging, breakfast and horse's keep	0	17	1
Baiting Bijou on road	0	0	10
RIS.—Ecu de France; supper, night's lodging, and horse's keep	0	15	0
Carried forward	£4	1	1

	English money.		
Brought forward	£4	1	1
CHAILLY.—Baiting horse and dejeuner	0	5	10
FONTAINEBLEAU.—Hotel de Paris; dinner, night's lodging, breakfast, and horse's keep	1	2	0
MONTEREAU.—Grand Monarque; dinner, night's lodg- ing, and horse's keep	0	15	3½
PONT SUR YONNE.—Baiting horse and dejeuner	0	3	11
SENS.—Hotel; dinner, three nights' lodging, two entire days, and horse's keep	2	19	7
VILLENEUVE.—Baiting horse and dejeuner	0	6	2
JOIGNY.—Hotel; dinner, night's lodging, and horse's keep	0	12	0½
Baiting horse and dejeuner	0	1	11
AUXERRE.—Hotel de la Fontaine; dinner, night's lodging, breakfast, and horse's keep	0	18	10½
CHABLIS.—Baiting horse and dejeuner	0	3	11
TONNERRE.—Hotel; supper, two nights' lodging, one entire day, dejeuner, and horse's keep	2	1	9½
ANCY LE FRANC.—Hotel de la Poste; dinner, night's lodging, and horse's keep	0	13	2
AISY.—Baiting horse and dejeuner	0	2	11
MONTBARD.—Hotel de la Poste; dinner, two nights' lodging, one entire day, and horse's keep	1	15	0
VILLENEUVE.—Baiting horse and dejeuner	0	2	11
CHANCEAUX.—Hotel; dinner, night's lodging, and horse's keep	0	10	5
ST. SEINE.—Baiting horse and dejeuner	0	4	7
DIJON.—Hotel de la Cloche; dinner, three nights' lodging, two entire days, and horse's keep	2	18	9
GENLIS.—Baiting horse and dejeuner	0	4	9½
AUXONNE.—Hotel; dinner, night's lodging, breakfast, and horse's keep	0	19	11
DOLE.—Hotel; dinner, two nights' lodging, one entire day, and horse's keep	1	17	0
Carried forward	£23	1	10½

	English money.
Brought forward	£23 1 10½
MONT SOUS VAUDRY.—Baiting horse and dejeuner	0 5 10
POLIGNY.—Hotel; dinner, night's lodging, breakfast, and horse's keep	0 16 9
MONTROND.—Baiting horse	0 0 10
CHAMPAGNOLE.—Hotel; dinner, night's lodging, breakfast, and horse's keep	1 3 9
ST. LAURENT.—Hotel; dinner, night's lodging, breakfast, and horse's keep	0 18 0
LES ROUSSES.—Hotel; dinner, night's lodging, and horse's keep	0 17 6
LA FAUCILLE.—Baiting horse and dejeuner	0 7 1
GEX.—Dinner, night's lodging, breakfast, and horse's keep	0 17 11

£28 9 6½

(Signed)

FRANCIS PINCHBOLD.

Total

Total of days on road.

THE END.

PRINTED BY THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE.

TABLE OF DISTANCES.

Days.				English miles.
1	from Calais	to St. Omer	about	18
2	„ St. Omer	„ St. Pol	„	39
3	„ St. Pol	„ Doullens	„	18
4	„ Doullens	„ Amiens	„	18
			Total	93

Days.				English miles.
1	from Paris	to Ris	about	16½
2	„ Ris	„ Fontainebleau	„	28½
3	„ Fontainebleau	„ Montereau	„	16½
4	„ Montereau	„ Sens	„	24
5	„ Sens	„ Joigny	„	22
6	„ Joigny	„ Auxerre	„	22½
7	„ Auxerre	„ Tonnerre	„	27
8	„ Tonnerre	„ Ancy le Franc	„	15
9	„ Ancy le Franc	„ Montbard	„	22½
10	„ Montbard	„ Chanceaux	„	25½
11	„ Chanceaux	„ Dijon	„	28
12	„ Dijon	„ Auxonne	„	24
13	„ Auxonne	„ Dole	„	12
14	„ Dole	„ Poligny	„	27
15	„ Poligny	„ Champagnole	„	18
16	„ Champagnole	„ St. Laurent	„	17
17	„ St. Laurent	„ Les Rousses	„	16
18	„ Les Rousses	„ Gex	„	24
19	„ Gex	„ Geneva	„	15

7 days' rest at different times.

26 Total of days on road.

Total 401

THE END.

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.

Collins, Charles A.

A cruise upon wheels the chronicle of some autumn wanderings among the
deserted post-roads of France

Bd.: 2

Leipzig 1874

P.o.angl. 74 fb-1/2

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11304853-1